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Speaking good of His name

SPEAKING GOOD OF HIS NAME

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SPEAKING GOOD OF HIS NAME

✓ BY

BASIL WILBERFORCE, D.D.

ARCHDEACON OF WESTMINSTER, CHAPLAIN TO THE SPEAKER,
SELECT PREACHER BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

Dedicated,

WITH GRATITUDE, TO THE WORKING MEN

WHO ATTENDED

THE MID-DAY SERVICE IN

THE CLOISTERS, WESTMINSTER ABBEY,

CORONATION YEAR,

1902.

GOD SAVE THE PEOPLE.

WHEN wilt Thou save the people ?
O God of mercy, when ?
The people, Lord, the people,
Not thrones and crowns, but men !
Flowers of Thy heart, O God, are they ;
Let them not pass, like weeds, away—
Their heritage a sunless day,
God save the people !

Shall crime bring crime for ever,
Strength aiding still the strong ?
Is it Thy will, O Father,
That man shall toil for wrong ?
“No,” say Thy mountains ; “No,” Thy skies ;
Man’s clouded sun shall brightly rise,
And songs ascend instead of sighs,
God save the people.

When wilt Thou save the people ?
O God of mercy, when ?
The people, Lord, the people,
Not thrones and crowns, but men !
God save the people ; Thine they are,
Thy children, as Thine angels fair ;
From vice, oppression, and despair,
GOD SAVE THE PEOPLE !

Ebenezer Elliott.

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SPEAKING GOOD OF HIS NAME

SPEAKING GOOD OF HIS NAME

“Be ye sure that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. O go your way into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and speak good of His name. For the Lord is gracious, His mercy is everlasting: and His truth endureth from generation to generation.”—
PSA. c. 2-4.

THE thought underlying this incomparable Psalm is appropriate to the characteristic teaching of the Gospel for the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, which is the duty of an attitude of constant thanksgiving towards the Parent Spirit who begot us; and yet, I suppose there is not a single portion of the Liturgy habitually uttered with less thought-conviction and reality than this Psalm c. And why? Because to utter the words intelligently, and with intention, presupposes an awakened perception of the relation of God to man and of the being and destiny of the race.

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Creation, as a cold, mechanical proposition, is a thought rather for vague alarm than for thanksgiving. To find yourself alive, without your consent, sentient, observant, reflective, with an apparatus of bodily organs capable of the keenest sensibility, with moral and mental faculties of restless energy, in the midst of stern, inflexible natural forces, against which you are as powerless as a vegetable or a zoophyte ; surrounded with sorrow, misery and degradation spreading their crushing weight over the race, and to be told that an Omnipotent Creator has made you thus, may awaken uneasiness, even resentment, but neither affection, duty, nor responsibility : the highest optimism within your reach would be fatalism or indifferentism, or if you are possessed of the poetic instinct which reveals to you the heart-beats of an agonised world, you will cry with Byron—

“Count the joys thine hours have seen,
Count o'er the days from anguish free!
And know, whatever thou hast been,
'Twere something better not to be.”

Merely to be intellectually persuaded that you are, because an incomprehensible first cause willed you to be, is to be wholly incapable of honestly being thankful unto Him and speaking good of His name.

Equally do the deepest instincts of man's better nature cause the words of thanksgiving to freeze upon his lips, when Creation is viewed in the lurid light of the heathenish dogmas that have crept into Christianity. To be told that the work of man's educational development, the end for which he is called into existence, is irrevocably limited to the few short years of human life, and that failure will be punished with the torments of a measureless eternity, is to intensify the reality of Byron's words—

“ 'Twere something better not to be.”

Man, we are given to understand, is created without his will ; he is “ made subject to vanity,” that is, endowed with animal appetites and placed in the midst of temptation without his consent. If in this environment his higher nature is not awakened, or if awakened it is not victorious, and if in that condition he passes out of the world, there is for him no alternative but an endless hell of unmitigable, wholly useless agony. If morality has any serious basis in the mind of man, when he calmly deliberately sets himself to think out this proposition, he is filled with horror at the cruelty of Creation. He thinks over the

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thousands of lost lives in South Africa, of the ten thousand lost at Galveston, and as his thought accumulates strength and intensity, and reaches out to the one thousand five hundred million human beings on the earth, and realizes that 95 per cent. at least of the whole population of the world are thus doomed to be tormented everlastingly, if he believes it, his reason staggers and breaks down under the strain, as the evidence of the madhouses will prove, or at best he cries out, "Why didst Thou not hold Thy hand and leave this wrong undone and this race unmade?" and for him it becomes morally impossible to go into His gates with thanksgiving. And yet this morning's Gospel inculcates thankfulness.

It is, however, within our capacity truthfully, humbly, heartily, and withal intelligently, to speak good of His name, and the capacity arises in two ways: first, from internal intuition; secondly, from external revelation.

Internal intuition is the whisper of God appealing to the Divine faculty within man in measure proportioned to his possibilities and necessities at the time. The universal conscience of good men all down the ages of the history of the race has affirmed the existence in man of an instinct of respon-

sibility, and an instinct of justice. These man discovers within himself. The laws of logical thought convince him that these instincts are not self-originated but inherited; that there must be at least as much in the first cause as in the sum of its effects; and he reasons upwards from man to God, and perceives, not through speculative imagination, but by the laws of logic, that the Omnipotent first cause must be Himself, the pure essence of that instinct of responsibility and justice which is written in the human heart, and that the fact of Creation establishes a close and unbreakable link between the self-existent life that creates and the life of dependence, weakness, and ignorance that is created; and by degrees he begins to perceive dimly the pre-eminent responsibility and justice of God, and recognises that the fact of his having been created is his warrant, signed, sealed, delivered in the Court of Eternal Justice, based upon all that he can know of honour and right-mindedness, that the Creator can never shake off His responsibility, never remove His presence, never withhold His helpful educative action till He has fulfilled His eternal purpose with regard to that which He has willed to create; and as he reverently meditates upon this thought of power, he is slowly possessed by the con-

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viction that there is One to whom he owes everything, but who also owes everything to him, and who would be of lower moral sense than the men whom in His unfettered freedom He had willed to make if He did not care for them as the apple of His eye, and pledge His Omnipotence to guide, redeem, and save them ; and so there is

“ A sense o'er all his soul impressed,
That he is weak yet not unblest ;
Since in him, round him, everywhere,
Eternal strength and wisdom are.”

And slowly he awakens from the dream of materialistic error, from the horrible caricatures of heathenish theology, from the infinite perplexity of the miseries of the world, and begins to realise that it is after all a wonderful and glorious thing to be ; and he says with his intelligence as well as with his lips, “The Lord is gracious. His mercy is everlasting ; His truth endureth.”

Upon this attitude of the mind of man, derived from internal intuition, the external revelation of the Gospel of the Incarnation descends in power as the dew of heaven rests upon the living plant. In the nature, the claims, the teaching, the example of the Divine Humanity, the whole conception of Creation is transfigured and glorified. The

Creator is revealed not as an omnipotent sculptor forming animated statues apart from Himself, but as the Parent Love-Spirit, constrained by the law of His own nature to utter Himself, repeat Himself, in a race which in essential being is of His own nature. Jesus, the Word made flesh, reveals the purpose of God, and solves the riddle of the race. Divine sonship, He declares, is of humanity; humanity is the Son of God; and man has but one Father, whatever the accident of his earthly parentage. As Spirit, man is begotten before all worlds, and embodied in this world to be educated into perfection by exposure to evil. The word Creation applies only to his conditioned stage of existence here; his essential being is denoted by the Greek words signifying "I am." It was the word used by Jesus when He said, "Before Abraham was, I am"; it was the word used by St. Paul on Mars Hill when he said "in God we live, and move, and have our being" (we are). We are personal spirits, begotten by the Father Spirit, made subject to the vanity of human birth, that through the bondage of corruption we may attain to the conscious liberty of the glory of sonship. Now, we groan and travail and suffer and sin and backslide and repent, but there stands the promise, "The creature shall be delivered

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from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God"; and therefore it is with an inextinguishable assurance, based upon the eternal truth of Divine sonship, that we should throw our whole hearts into the utterance, "Be thankful unto Him, and speak good of His name."

Though now we see only as through a glass darkly, this is the fact of the mystery of human life based upon the distinct testimony of internal and external revelation. Dare to look calmly and deeply into it. When the Parent Spirit said, "Let us make man," you and I, in our separate individualities, were objects of His thought; the fact that we are, as we sit in this church, is the guarantee that we have risen from the mystery of the Divine Will, that we shall continue to be in the vista of the coming Eternity; the lines of our lives were laid before the world was, they shall endure when the world has passed away.

To a consciousness thus awakened the Christ appeals in this morning's Gospel. "There met Him ten men that were lepers." He will heal them. How does He heal them? By medicine, or touch, or mesmerism, or what? Being Himself consciously full of the Divine life, understanding in its com-

pleteness the power of spirit over matter, knowing that in each of these sufferers there was latent the Divine nature, recognising that physical disease is the result of a false condition of life where the Divine nature has not fair play, He, without recorded action or word, just wills His "life-force" into them. Then, following precisely the method afterwards prescribed by St. Paul, He bids them to "reckon themselves" healed, to act as though they were healed, without any sign of restoration to go and show themselves to the priest and offer the appointed sacrifice. "And it came to pass that as they went" their own dormant, remedial, Divine capacity, called into activity by the injected life-force of the perfect specimen of the race, strengthened and stimulated by their obedience in reckoning themselves healed, prevails, and "as they went they were cleansed." And one, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down at His feet giving Him thanks. And Jesus said, "Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?" This question was obviously asked to stimulate thought, for the answer is clear. They were doing what the Christ told them; they were in the lines of orthodoxy, of ecclesiastical obedience, of Mosaic traditions;

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they were subjects not for blame, but for praise. It was the duty of the priest, the ceremonial priest, to declare and pronounce, to the lepers, being healed, the absolution and remission of the separating penalties of the deadly disease, and restore them to the fellowship of the congregation. These nine, in the rectitude of their literal obedience to the grim rigour of ecclesiastical bondage, of the Mosaic code, in all probability severely condemned the impulsive, unorthodox, dissenting Samaritan, who was disobeying the traditions of the Church. On the rudimentary, the superficial, plane, they were right, and he was wrong.

Meanwhile, where was the tenth leper? Whether a flash of spiritual light so illuminated him that he instantaneously perceived the reality behind all ceremony, symbol, and tradition, I know not; but he, in the true, the spiritual, the esoteric sense, was the only one of the ten who literally obeyed the command. He did show himself to the Priest, the only Priest of humanity; he did offer the sacrifice, the only sacrifice the Eternal Spirit can accept—the loving gratitude of a responsive, an awakened, a kindled heart; the Eucharistic sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. And just here lies, to my mind, the hidden, the esoteric teaching of

this history. It is the reality, the comprehensiveness, the accessibility, the completeness of the High Priesthood of the One Perfect Mediator or touchpoint between the Illimitable Soul and the conditioned soul, that is between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.

Behind all symbols, traditions, theologies, ecclesiasticisms, externalisms — all most valuable in their place—behind all is the living, loving, personality of Jesus. “Go, show thyself to the priest.” Yes, indeed, “if there be any,” the Prayer Book says, “who cannot quiet his own conscience, let him come to some discreet and learned minister of God’s Word, and open his grief.” Such are surely in the line of obedience—such will get blessing; and yet the tenth leper shows unto you a more excellent way, not discrediting the other, but including and transcending it. The perfect, human-Divine representative of the race, the elder brother of humanity, the manifestation of God, and the explanation of man, the Lord Jesus, is ever present, ever accessible. He is not a name in history, a phantom of the imagination. He is a vivid reality. He is with us always, even to the end of the age—the age of education, of perplexity, of weeping; and in the secret of His presence the leprosy of sin can be healed,

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the tortures of conscience can be stilled, the deepest needs of the soul can be satisfied.

Go, show thyself to that Priest. He is ever ready. Very specially will He await us in His own Divine ordinance, the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. He is present there; not because He is nowhere else, but because He is everywhere else. And there, in spite of the bitter sorrow of the world, in spite of the moral difficulties of believing in the Divine government of the world, it is possible to "go into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: to be thankful unto Him, and to

"SPEAK GOOD OF HIS NAME."

LIGHTNING

LIGHTNING

“For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall the presence of the Son of man be.”—MATT. xxiv. 27 (R.V. margin).

THESE words contain, I imagine, a sublime and mysterious challenge, both to philosophy and to faith. The thought is an Epiphany thought, a “manifestation” thought. It is an axiom to be remembered in considering the symbols and metaphors of Scripture, that they extend not only to the appearance but to the actual nature of that which is used as an analogy; and while they are never intended to be forced into an exact similarity, they aim at stimulating thought and exciting imagination. For example, in the analogy of the mustard seed, it is clear that it is not merely to the size of the seed but to its nature that our attention is directed, to an unfolded potentiality of greatness, a life-germ capable of infinite expansion, hidden in a minute and apparently lifeless object. Is it not thus with

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this comprehensive symbol? The Presence of the Divine Humanity is likened to a flash of lightning; not, I imagine, to the destructive zig-zag forked lightning of the thunderstorm—that metaphor was appropriated by our Lord Himself to evil personified, when He said: “Behold, I saw Satan, like lightning, fall from heaven”—but rather to that harmless beautiful illumination which we call summer lightning, or sheet lightning. When the electric discharge permeates masses of weakly electrified vapour, the appearance is that of a sudden and widespread brilliancy, like a momentary return to daylight, followed instantaneously by darkness. This lightning is not only harmless, but beneficial, as indicating the restoration of atmospheric equilibrium after it has been disturbed.

What, then, is this sheet lightning, and in what sense can it be an analogy of the Presence of the Divine Humanity, the light of the world? Sheet lightning is the flashing into manifestation of an atmospheric power, always present everywhere, but not always manifested. No man can define electricity, and yet it has been scientifically demonstrated to be the combining agent of matter, and without it the million million atoms of the material world would be disintegrated. Faraday illustrated, by experiment before

the Royal Society, that a single drop of water was held together by as much electricity as would produce a flash of lightning. But, as an object of sense, as that which can be defined, weighed, measured, tabulated, electricity is unknown. No man hath seen electricity at any time—the flash coming forth from the bosom of the mystery, that doth declare it. It is made known to us only by its effects; its definition is the law of its working. In the beginning was electricity; and without electricity was not anything held together that was held together. And electricity was made lightning, and shone amongst us.

It positively adds a new splendour to a natural phenomenon that our Lord should thus clothe it with sacredness, and apply it as an analogy of His own *Parousia*, or Presence, amongst the sons of men. The Incarnation, He teaches us, is God manifest, as the lightning flash is electricity manifest. His presence on earth is the coming into visibility of a Divine, world-creating, world-sustaining Presence, always everywhere diffused and operative; always everywhere the life, the spirit; but impersonal and unknowable to the finite minds of men, except as revealed under some limitation that man's eye can see and man's intelligence apprehend.

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Thus, then, it is the distinguishing glory of the doctrine of the Incarnation that it reveals the invisible Parent-source of all things in the face of Jesus Christ. God is Spirit, and spirit, though undefinable, is the one eternal substance out of which all forms of existence emerge. It is only, therefore, as God acts that He can be seen, or indeed really conceived. His self-existent life claims our attention in the natural world; one of the most beautiful passages in the "confessions" is where Augustine tells us how Nature led him up to God. If creation is the transmutation of God's thought into matter, how transcendent must be the sense of beauty in the Divine nature. When we gaze upon a summer sunset, with its thousand nameless tints and hues ever changing and deepening; when, through a microscope, we mark the jewelled sheen upon the throat of a tropical humming-bird, or the iridescence upon the surface of a shell, or leaf, or flower, and know that this is how God thinks, we can believe that "eye hath not seen, nor the heart of man conceived the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." Again, how the mechanism of the human eye or hand reveals the benevolent adaptive skill of the Divine originator; and the regular movements of the huge planets—so balanced that thousands

of years do not induce the slightest error, or disturb the unchanging precision of their way—how they assure us of the ceaseless activity and accuracy and fidelity of the Divine nature. But in all these wonders and beauties God is not really known. The utmost conception of God, from His self-revelation in Nature, is that of the Supreme Intelligence; and the inmost heart of man, when strained by agony, craves for a more intimate conception of his God than this. Now if God, being Spirit, can only be known in operation, how shall He satisfy this craving? how shall He make known to man His moral character? how shall He convince us that the Eternal Heart is friendly, loving, kind, forgiving? If He cannot do this by sun, or star, or sky, or leaf, or shell, He must do it by acting out His moral principles in some unique and visible human life; the moral glory of the Divine nature must be projected through the workings of a human mind and flesh. It is the logical necessity of the Divine nature—the inevitable inference that led Kingsley to cry out, after he had found God as Universal Intelligence, “If He has not become Incarnate He will.” Therefore, in the fulness of time, there stood on the earth Jesus of Nazareth—the one sinless paragon of human beauty, the enigma of the race. Rousseau,

who denied Him, yet confessed, "If the life and death of Socrates were the life and death of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God." Thus is He the unanswerable problem of the centuries to those who reject His credentials. But to those who accept Him, who, from their hearts, "Come to Jesus as they are, weary and worn and sad," is He an enigma? an unaccountable anomaly in history? No, He is the moral life of the Everlasting God, coming into activity in the field of human duty. He is God manifest in the flesh. And as the sheet lightning is the visible atmospheric manifestation of an all-pervading force, itself for ever invisible, so Jesus of Nazareth is the visible moral embodiment of an all-pervading Creating Spirit Himself for ever invisible; and the analogy stands true, perfect, appealing, "As the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall the Presence of the Son of man be."

No human exposition can do more than touch the outermost borders of this great theme; but even thus to touch it reverently, believingly, is to find it a practical, life-changing doctrine. Of course, thought without practise is only irreligious philosophy, but convictions wrought into the soul affect the springs of action and emotion. If this

Epiphany analogy were only true to us, and we believed that the superhuman power of one all-creating Lord were as near to us as the atmosphere we breathe; that His power, His justice, His love, His pardon, His helpfulness were ever ready to irradiate the simplest duty of daily life, in the shop, the office, the family, the parish, would not conduct be transfigured and life regenerated? If we believed in the presence of a changeless Christ in the midst of the changing scenes of a fading world, would not the darkened soul be cheered and comforted, the most harassed life be lifted above vexation, doubt, the accusations of conscience and the power of sin?

Fellow-pilgrims, these eyes of the soul are greatly in our own power. The faculty of spiritual discernment, though it may be withered from non-use, is the hereditary possession of every human being. Eyes must be blind indeed that cannot see a lightning flash. The Christ is the lightning flash that reveals the nature of the Father Who loves us. Act as though it were true. Try it for a single week. The usual daily round awaits you. You will be disappointed, slandered, over-worked, over-worried, misunderstood. Take it all as though you knew that an intensely interested and sympathising heavenly mind were

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shaping, guiding, bending every little force and event in your discipline towards a definite and special end. Let the solemn mystery of that Presence challenge you and subdue you. I will tell you what it can do—it can calm your soul, restrain your actions, curb your temper, purify your heart, chasten your lips.

There is a sun-dial at Granada, in Spain, with the motto round it, "I only mark the shining hours." Just so; it is a mechanical optimist: when cloudy hours come, they are as though they were not. And for us, as Faber says:—

"If our faith were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word,
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the presence of the Lord."

Obviously, in a very special and influential manner, is that same Presence shrouded in every guaranteed act of the Church. A ministry in the Christian Church is one authoritative conducting agent between the Divine Humanity and the needy souls of men. It is His sacred hand that baptizes; His mouth absolves; He who in the Holy Eucharist interpenetrates our lives with His own. We clergy are only the servants at Cana, who hold the vessels, the contents of which He is blessing. Do not excommunicate yourself

from the touchpoint with immortality which He has left as the richest treasure in the Church. At the supreme moment of earnest, faithful communion, the veil between the two worlds is very thin; the spirits of the departed are very near; the soul is strengthened by a bath of Heaven's sunshine from the Presence of the glorified Redeemer—God's lightning-flash illuminating the darkness of the world.

“Taste and see how gracious the Lord is.” Come to the Holy Eucharist, in trust, faith, repentance. Do not mar the effect of a transcendent reality by seeking for rationalising interpretations.

“Christ was the Word Who spake it,
He took the bread and brake it.
And what that Word did make it,
That I believe, and take it.”

And though you shall know no more of the process whereby the result is reached than the master of the feast knew at Cana, and though we, who hold the chalice and paten, know no more than the servants who drew the water knew, as you are filled with that sweet sense of nearness and cleansing, and as your communions grow in reality and intensity, you too shall say, “Thou hast kept the good wine till now.”

THE CHILD JESUS

THE CHILD JESUS

“The Child Jesus.”—ST. LUKE ii. 43.

It is an Epiphany text. And Epiphany, or manifestation, is the golden key that unlocks the mysteries of the universe; the password that admits to the Arcana of the nearness of God to man; the appeal that most influentially affects the practice of human life.

For Epiphany is the unveiling of the boundless Fatherhood of God, and the limitless immanence of the Word in humanity, and the focussing of that immanence in one chosen specimen of the race. And the “Child Jesus” is the Infinite solicitude of the Creative Soul pleading with humanity in a form wholly lovable, and, when once recognised, wholly irresistible. Vast is the accumulation of enthusiasms, aspirations, beliefs, swaying the destinies of civilisation, that have gathered round the expression “the Child Jesus.” The very movements of the cosmic forces appear to have responded

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to some abnormal attraction in the "Child Jesus," for the students of the stars, the disciples of Zarathrusta, were led to the Infant Jesus by a meteoric luminousness resembling a star, which was obeying, not the law of gravitation, but the attraction of a little Child; for we read "it went before them till it came and stood over where the young Child was."

Thus the lingering echoes of the Christmas Festival, and all the appointed Scriptures for the early part of the year, direct especially our attention to childhood, to the dignity and sacredness of infancy. A little child! What a wondrous concentration of infolded potentialities, awaiting their unfolding, is a little child; how obviously not a receptacle to be filled with memorised facts, but a Divine mystery to be educed, as a rosebud is educed by evolution from within and not coercion from without! It was President Garfield who told us of the old schoolmaster in the backwoods who always doffed his cap to his barefooted scholars, on the ground that he might be saluting a future President of the United States; and he was, for amongst those boys was Garfield himself. But further; in the Child Jesus it is implied that the self-manifestation of the moral character of the Absolute in one member of the race, which

we call the Incarnation, indicates a Divine immanence in humanity as a whole. This immanence spiritually-minded thinkers have ever recognised. It is recorded of the father of Origen, the most enlightened of the early Christian writers, that he once bent over his sleeping child and kissed him on the breast, and when asked by the child's mother, "Wherefore dost thou thus kiss our child?" replied, "I kiss the earthly Temple that enshrines the living God."

Now the thought of childhood which pervades the teaching of this season appears to me to invite consideration, and to suggest the threefold lesson of Faith, Hope, and Charity, or rather the aspects of those graces which may be expressed as Trust, Patience, Activity. And first, Trust. The peculiar fascination of the gospel of the Incarnation is that it gathers up all the Godward instincts of all the ages and satisfies them in the Person of One who was the Word made flesh. The Word, or the Absolute in self-utterance, has ever been inferred by the true thinkers, but only inferred. In the fulness of time the Word sought separate human enclosure in one spotless life; and in this objective manifestation, in a single human Personality, of the subjective Logos or Word, nothing is more significant than the emphasis

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laid upon infancy. This transcendent revelation was not made in the created form of a full-grown man. The Incarnation ennobled all stages of human life up to its maturity; and, in this ennobling, the weakness and dependence of man's earliest hours are emphasised. Neither did the purpose of God wait till the Babe was grown before claiming for Him the homage of man. The angels' hymn is an acknowledgment of veiled Godhead; the shepherds kneel in adoration before the Child of Mary; the Persian Magi worshipped the Babe; the aged Simeon in the Temple just touches the Child Jesus, and claims his release in the words, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." All this proves that Godhead was not something superadded to the Christ in His maturer years, but that the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person was under limitations in the Child Jesus. There must be in this emphasising of holy infancy some profound message, some word intended to reach the centre of our being; and it is just here that I trace the appeal of the Child Jesus to our Trust.

Are we not justified in sometimes seeking an analogy from a high-minded work of

fiction? The appeal of God in the Child Jesus is illustrated with remarkable power in George Eliot's well-known masterpiece, "The Story of Silas Marner, the Weaver of Raveloe." It is impossible to weary of that story as a literary gem and a study in human psychology. The picture of the old weaver, soured by injustice, wrongfully suspected of crime, eating his heart out in solitude, possessed by one consuming passion—love for the gold he was slowly accumulating, guinea by guinea, and burying under the floor of his cottage; and then, on that night when he is robbed of his idol, his golden guineas, in all his mad despair, finding on his doorstep a little child, beautiful, helpless, appealing, who becomes his saviour and his sanctifier. And how did that babe save him? By stimulating him to lift himself, by awakening in him a love stronger than his greed, a tenderness he never knew before, an unselfishness that revolutionised his character, banishing his old bad life, changing his old hard heart by the expulsive power of a new affection, initiating within him a fresh fountain of vital intensity. The golden hair of the little child becomes more to him than the golden gleam of his lost guineas; her golden life illumines the darkness of his soul, and Silas Marner becomes a new man.

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There is no more beautiful story in the English language ; it reaches far beyond the fulfilment of the lines of Wordsworth :—

“A child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts.”

It is a fulfilment of the prophecy, “A little child shall lead them.” But, beyond all, it is a word-picture of the Eternal counsel of the Infinite Intelligence, appealing for the confidence of man, in the Incarnation of the Child Jesus. There is an attitude of the human heart, wearied with mammon-worship, terror-stricken with hideous caricatures of the Divine Nature, staggered by vastness, lost, like Silas Marner, in sordid earthliness, loathing life but fearing death, hating man but crying out against God. And God has given a Divine answer to that attitude. In the stillness of the night, twenty centuries ago, in Galilee, He brought His antidote, and laid it at the world's doorstep, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger in the stable at Bethlehem. “Poor heart,” He says, “what idea is this that thou hast conceived of thy God? Look on this Babe.” This is what thy God is to thee, wooing thy heart, sharing thy life, claiming thy affection,

intelligible to thy humanity, longing for thy confidence, stooping to bring pardon and peace and a new life down to thee; and as thou learnest to love this Child-aspect of thy God He shall transfigure thy conduct, regenerate thy nature, move thee to holier practice, not by stern discipline, but by the expulsive power of a new affection. I know not how the hearts of others bear the perplexing trials of life. I know we must all sometimes feel stricken, abandoned, despairing. The message of the Child Jesus is one of rest; it is the Divine whisper, "I am with you, in the very trial. Trust; what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Thus, by suggestion, by thought-stimulation, this Child-embodiment of the Infinite Intensity called God, provides strong consolation for the anxious heart, and justifies the self-rallying cry of the forty-second Psalm, "Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul? why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God."

Again, the Child-aspect of the Incarnation inculcates the grace of Hope, in the form of Patience, by teaching that the Christ, the Christ-nature, must be born in us, and very gradually increase in wisdom and stature, so that we need never be disheartened at the tardiness of our progress. This was the inner

meaning of our Lord's question, "If David call Him Lord, how is He then His son?" If I call Jesus Lord, how is He then the offspring of my heart? The Christ, the Divine Humanity, must be both Son and Lord of every heart that He purifies, sanctifies, and saves. "Whosoever shall do the will of God," He said, "the same is My mother." I have been born in his heart as truly as I was born of Mary, nay, more truly, for spiritual things are more true than natural. To know this is to face our feeble attainment, our halting progress, our many mistakes, with greater patience. It is to perceive that the need of the human soul is rather evolution than conversion; that in the evolution of God's life in man there are no short cuts, but a gradual unfolding of a principle of interior vitality. And the motto from this thought is, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," while the Child-Christ-nature within you "increases in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

Thirdly, the Child Jesus appeals to the grace of Charity, or love in activity. It could be readily shown that the adoration of the Child Jesus—a form of devotion now nearly unknown, but common in the early Church—exercised a marked influence upon

the position of childhood in the world. Ancient literature and poetry ignored children. In the old civilisations of Greece and Rome, with all their wisdom and glory, the murder of children was permitted. In Greece, if a child were born with the slightest physical defect it was instantly destroyed; if not, the father was taken to see it on the ninth day, and if he took it in his arms it was reared, if not, it was exposed in the open air to perish by starvation. The custom was the same in Rome. A speech is on record, made by a Roman noble in the Senate, addressed to the highest aristocracy, in which he stated that of all those whom he was addressing there was probably not one who had not thus disposed of one or more of his children. The entirely altered attitude of the human race, with regard to the sanctity of young children, is a direct result of the new civilisation which lay in germ within the "Child Jesus" in the cradle at Bethlehem. The non-recognition of infanticide, as a social convenience, is an illustration of the elevating power of the ethics of the Gospel. But can any reasonable man, with personal experience of the lives that are lived in our great cities, honestly say that infanticide, not as a social convenience, but as a consequence of social

disorder, is abolished? Do you imagine that the majority of professing Christians, whose own lives are mercifully shielded by a favourable environment, have ever striven to realise the appalling aggregate of child misery and child murder which lies in the fiery track of England's besetting sin?

The darkest shadow on darkest England is the implied misery of the children. Mr. Ruskin, in his "Ethics of the Dust," says: "The last and worst thing that can be said of a nation is that it has made its children sad and weary." There are several million children in this country, and many thousands are growing up sad and weary through the curse of intemperance. If it were possible to flash into the minds of all present a single glimpse of the child misery occasioned by this one cause; of the starved, beaten, cursed, kicked, mutilated, demoralised little ones of our great cities, neutrality towards so unmitigated an evil would be no longer possible.

I know we are considered to exaggerate. The judicial bench does not exaggerate. Mr. Justice Grantham recently gave utterance to his experience at one session. He said: "Twelve murders, eighteen attempts at murder, woundings without number that were just as likely to have ended in murder,

have been mine and my brother judges' daily fare for the last four weeks in one circuit, and in almost every case, as appeared in evidence, drink was the cause." I ask you to endeavour to realise the condition of the children in such homes as these. In most of our large towns there are whole streets of such homes, a disgrace to our civilisation, and an insult to our Christianity, and around such homes are the gaudiest and the most prosperous of the public-houses, confronting the minimum of resisting power with the maximum of temptation.

No, there is no exaggeration here. We, who know, think it our duty to speak from the pulpit upon this unsavoury subject, partly because it is so generally avoided, and partly because it is burnt into our souls by long ministry in crowded centres of the population. We know the answer that is given by this maddening vice to the touching query, "Can a woman's tender care cease towards the child she bare?" A mother, whom I knew myself, returned home one Saturday night maddened with alcohol. After angry altercation with her husband, she hurled at him a lighted paraffin lamp, which fell on the bed where her two boys of five and six were sleeping. One was burnt to death where he lay; the other was carried, shrieking in

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agony, to the hospital, to linger a few days, in suffering unspeakable, till death came to his relief. And the "Child Jesus," who grew into the Man Christ Jesus, loved the children; filled His sacred arms with them when He was weary. "Suffer them to come to Me," He said. "Receive them in My name," He pleaded. "You had better be drowned in the sea," He declared, "than put a stumbling block in their way." And we, with our twentieth-century enlightenment, and advanced esoteric Christianity, and boasted civilisation, reply to the "Child Jesus" in Tennyson's bitter sarcasm:—

"Feed the budding rose of boyhood with the drainage of
your sewer;
Send the drain into the fountain, lest the stream should
issue pure.
Do your best to harm the worst, to lower the rising
race of men.
Have we risen from out the beast, then back into the
beast again."

Obviously I have a definite purpose in bringing this thought before you to-day. I said consideration of the Child Jesus indicated the grace of activity. I desire to suggest some channels for that activity. First, as to the predominance of the national evil to which I have alluded. While I freely

acknowledge that it is not possible to sweep away this prolific cause of child misery by despotically removing entirely from the masses of the people opportunities for a customary indulgence, to which they are addicted, you can strengthen the hands of every association aiming at amelioration, and you can raise your voice in protest, in season and out of season, against any attempt, parliamentary or otherwise, to root more firmly into the national life this wholesale inspirer of lust, cruelty, pauperism, and insanity.

Secondly, we can remember that when Jesus preached His sermon from the text of a little Jew boy, whom He stood in the midst of His congregation, He distinctly implied that a little child, whether taken from a palace or the gutter, was a sacrament of Himself. As the life germ is in the seed, as the growth power is in the bulb of the hyacinth, so is the Christ-nature hidden, buried in the child; and we can purposely cultivate a spirit of sympathy with the minutest sorrow and most infinitesimal joy of the smallest member of the family. "I have hurt myself," wailed a tiny child to a busy literary father. "Well, I can't help it, my son," replied the father without raising his eyes from his manuscript. The little eyes filled with tears, the little

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lip pouted as the child said, "You might have said you were sorry." It presents a moral ideal; one in whom the Jesus-spirit was consciously stirring would have laid aside his manuscript and taken the child in his arms, and it would probably have influenced powerfully, though unconsciously, the child's future life.

Thirdly, we can contribute liberally, at some personal sacrifice, to each and all of the admirable institutions, which the unwearied philanthropy of the age has organised, for the direct rescue of the children. Fifty thousand children are at this moment in various institutions in this country, rescued from a terrible environment, growing into good citizens under happy influences. It is not possible to exaggerate the boon to the nation of so noble a work as that effected by Dr. Barnardo's Homes; by the Church of England Waifs' and Strays' Association; and by not a few societies on parallel lines. And as for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, it has wiped away deluges of tears from young eyes, and has rescued 100,000 children from lives of torture since its institution. To-day I plead specially for one well known, most valuable focus of Christian compassion, the Newport Market Refuge. I

appreciate it, not only because of its connection with the names of honoured friends now departed, who were instrumental in originating it, but also on account of its admirable work in the social recovery of multitudes of little boys between the ages of eleven and thirteen, a considerable proportion of whom are rescued from the Westminster parishes. "If thou hast much, give liberally; if thou hast little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little." The whole spirit of the Epiphany teaching emphasises my appeal. The Zoroastrians presenting their gifts to the Child Jesus are an inspired declaration, under the form of a parable, that the highest use to which intellect or leisure or wealth can be put is the service of the human race, for the "Child Jesus" is the revealed specimen in perfection, of the Divine immanent in man.

Wendell Phillips, the American emancipator, once said: "The only interest worthy of the deep controlling anxiety of thoughtful men is the shielding and training of the children of a nation." Every pound given to the Newport Market Refuge will have its weight in shielding, in training, in wiping away tears from the faces of the children of this nation. Every self-denying gift which helps to remove a stumbling-block from the

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path of one of the little ones is recognised in the courts of heaven, for Jesus said, "Verily, I say unto you, Their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven."

HUMAN LILIES

HUMAN LILIES

“Consider the lilies, how they grow.”—ST. MATT. vi. 28.

THOUGH it is not an actual quotation from the Epiphany Scriptures, it embodies emphatically an Epiphany thought, for it is the Master's great analogy from natural history to human psychology. Probably the lily of Galilee was our Lord's favourite flower. I am not aware that He mentioned any other. And if we were capable of considering the lily, not by chemical analysis, but by the laws of philosophic thought, and knowing how it grew, we should discover that the whole history of created (or, rather, derived) life was bound up in the nature of that flower. If we could trace it back to its very first beginning we should have solved the riddle of life, and discovered—as Tennyson said of the flower in the cran-nied wall—the secret of God and man. If, therefore, we consider earnestly the flower that Jesus took for His text on the mountain in Galilee, it leads to those thoughts that lie

too deep for tears—it brings God so near as to be awe-inspiring ; for the lily is a model of God's thinking ; its fragrance and beauty are an eternal idea, clothing itself in matter. There is a mystery immanent in the lily which is the same in kind as, though in infinitely less degree than, the mystery of the Incarnation itself. It is a Sacrament of God ; an affirmation of the creative energy of Him in whom we live and move and have our being ; and that Creative Energy is nothing less than the same Spirit who brooded upon the face of the waters before the earth or the heavens were made ; and we see that in Nature's simplest form God is "never so far off as even to be near." But, after all, it is as an image and a symbol of man that the lily is more particularly used in this extract from the Sermon on the Mount. It is a fact of deep significance that even a lily is the unfolding of a vast Divine plan, conceived in eternity and carried out in time. It is a still more sublime truth that God's secret, hidden in the lily, is practically the same mystery as the inmost spirit immanent in man, and that God's great claim upon human hearts, and man's unceasing stimulus to strive after the higher life, and his justification for perfect confidence in God, in the midst of the heart-breaking perplexities of the world, consist in the fact that God is working not merely

from without upon His creatures, but within them, as the life of their life, slowly evolving the character which from all eternity He has purposed, as the inner principle of life in the lily slowly evolves the perfect flower.

Now, if this revelation of God's intimate contact with man, as a vital force working within him, rather than as a task-master compelling him from without, frees us from the old haunting phantom of possible final failure, it none the less demands of us active and unceasing striving. If it is the function of God, by the law of His being, to work in every man, it is the function of every man, by the law of his being, to work with God. A lily, our Lord implies, is the analogy of a man; but it is an analogy with a difference. So far as we can judge, the lily is irresponsible. It appears to us to be evolved solely by the direct action of the Creative Spirit operating in natural law; its growth and beauty are the automatic result of the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations. But man is a *thinking* lily. "We are men," says Tennyson, "strong in will, to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." Our life, like the life of the lily, is from above—that is, from within. It is Divine; but it may be helped by our care or hindered by our neglect; that which in the lily is probably mechanical and

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unconscious must be with us a willing exercise of spiritual energy. We are not responsible for where we are planted. "My Father is the Husbandman." The environment into which I am born is His affair, not mine; and all lilies have not the same environment to overcome, or the same difficulties to meet. There are some planted in pleasant gardens, protected from trial; there are others, like the beautiful water-lily, whose whole growth is a continuous struggle, who must rise from the very depths, and lift their heads above the pressure around them, and there, resting on the surface of the very difficulty they have overcome, open out their golden petals and feed upon the sunshine. The power of rising in the water-lily is calculated exactly according to the depth of the water in which the natural law has planted it. There hath no temptation taken it but such as it shall be able to overcome. There is within the stem of the water-lily an elaborate apparatus, consisting of an elastic spiral coil, which expands and contracts, giving it power to rise or sink as the water deepens or diminishes, so that it may be always above the pressure in which it lives, and face to face with the life-giving sun. Similarly, the human lily is planted where the Father wills, and, where each one finds himself, there is the place in which he can grow if he

wills. The spiral coil is in him, a spiritual energy, a volition directed by conscience, a moral capacity which God provides, capable, if exercised, of lifting the life above every disadvantage of birth or surrounding. The beautiful, trusting, obedient lives we constantly meet with, in the midst of the lowest possible environments, amongst the poorest, are sufficient to convince us that the spiral coil in God's human lilies is available to lift the life into the sunshine out of the greatest pressure, and that no temptation is sent that man is not able to bear if he uses his ability. The ability, the spiral coil of the water-lily, the moral capacity capable of resisting the inertia of the flesh, is that to which our Lord alludes, when, a little further on in this same passage, He speaks of the two masters, the two natures within us, the heavenly seed, the Kingdom of Heaven within, the Divine nature, which, when we are born into this world, is enshrined in the earthly nature, for purposes of self-knowledge and education. And the severity of the strife between these two, between duty and inclination, lust and self-control, temper and gentleness—in other words, God and Mammon, spiral coil and inertia—is the measure of the growth of the higher man. If the will, the intention, is resolutely thrown on the side of the Divine

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force working within, which is the Christ nature, God's plant rises above the lower tendencies and the narrower life, and, like the tall water-lily, whose spiral coil has lifted it above the environment that seemed to hinder it, and which now rests on its very hindrance, the growing child of God utilises his natural tendencies as helps to force the whole man Godwards.

This is a useful thought with which to close the Epiphany season.

Is the spiral coil, the Divine nature, thus lifting each one of us? The grace we do not exercise, the power we do not exert, like the limb we do not use, or the faculty we do not expand, atrophies, withers, weakens. The first step is to believe in the power, and the next to suffer the life to come out. The saying about not "toiling and spinning" has reference only to the production of Christian character, and it means that Christian character is not a mosaic of moralities, painfully built up in imitation of a model, but a life; not hand-made, like Solomon's robes, but God evolved, like the lily's flower. It is no encouragement to idleness on the human plane; it is the clear, obvious duty of man to toil and spin, and take thought for the morrow, and provide suitable garments. His clothing will not grow on him, and his food will not fall from heaven into

his mouth. "Men must work, and women must weep," yes, and work too. Humanity's idlers, the voluntarily unemployed, will find no justification for their idleness in these words of the Lord; but the words do mean that the clothing of Christian character and the evolution of the higher self are not gained by toiling and spinning, but by emphasising the existence of that principle of interior vitality of which we have been speaking, and then letting the life come out. This is only another way of saying God's inworking must be met by our forth-putting. If God is willing His will within us, it is for us to suffer that will to come forth into action in the details of our daily lives. If we believe that a Force and Intelligence is ever shaping and guiding every event and opportunity, and trial and disappointment, in these lives of ours, towards a definite end, it is for us to watch for it, to conform to it, to strengthen it, to live as recognising it, to be much in prayer, often at communion, quick in repentance; to strive to live purely, nobly, kindly, helpfully, self-forgetfully in the common duties and daily frictions of ordinary life; and it is in this quiet, ceaseless, almost unobserved overcoming that God's human lilies grow, rather than by heroic leaps and bounds.

Finally, it is in the recognition of the evolu-

tion of this ultimately irresistible principle of interior vitality in the race, in nations, in individuals, that the true impulse of prudent, active, philanthropy is discoverable. The truth that I stated, that God is responsible for environment, has its limitations. For some environments man is responsible; and the wise philanthropist knows that evolution is profoundly influenced by environment. Now, it is a fact in our national life that tens of thousands of children are being brought up in an environment that is a curse and a shame to our civilisation. A nation that boasts of its wealth, its commerce, its increased scientific knowledge, its growing mastery over matter, and ignores the moral mischief at its heart, is imperilling its very existence.

“Is it well that while we range
 With science glorying o'er the time,
 City children soak and blacken
 Soul and sense in city slime?
 There among the glooming alleys
 Progress halts on palsied feet;
 Crime and hunger cast our maidens
 By the thousand on the street.”

In the previous sermon I spoke of the condition of the children of the nation, and I then mentioned, amongst others, one admirable institution, the Church of England Waifs' and Strays' Society, which to-day

makes its earnest appeal to you for liberal help. The characteristic work of this society is to transplant God's lilies from a poisonous environment into favourable soil, where they may grow healthily and happily. It has, in this manner, rescued 10,000 destitute and outcast children, and these are received, not into large institutions, but into real homes, of which there are ninety in different parts of Great Britain, where a true family life is maintained. Now, if we believe the Epiphany message, which is that God is the spirit of evolution in man, as in the vine and the lily; that His creative reproducing spirit pulses in every flower, uplifts every seed, inhabits every man, and was made Personal to us by being specifically Incarnate in Jesus; and if we accept the declaration of Jesus, that whosoever receives one of these human little ones, in His name, receives Him, we have a powerful motive for increasing the usefulness of this society, by really liberal and self-sacrificing gifts; and many children, now homeless and outcast, will have reason to be grateful that we have thus

CONSIDERED THE LILY.

THE WINGS OF A DOVE

THE WINGS OF A DOVE *

“Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away and be at rest.”—PSA. lv. 6.

IN our Lord's suggestive analogy from natural history to human psychology contained in the Sermon on the Mount, He said, “Behold the birds.” The significance of the injunction appears to me to lie in its appeal to three distinct elements in the nature of man—the emotional, the intellectual, the spiritual: the emotional, in that it suggests the region of perception and imagination by appealing to the sense of beauty; the intellectual, in that it implies the exercise of the thought-capacity by suggesting certain facts as to the Divine order of the evolution of life on this planet which are appreciable by observation; the spiritual, in that it lifts our thoughts high above materialism by stimulating the spiritual

* In the picture of the Cloister Service a white pigeon is introduced. This bird had her nest in the cloisters, and constantly passed to and fro over the head of the preacher during the service.

capacity, the ascending Godward principle, the instinct of immortality, the indefinable conviction of another and a higher world; which instinct articulates itself, in the poetic phraseology of the East, in the cry, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away and be at rest." First it appeals to the sense of beauty, our lingering hereditary memory of the home whence we came trailing our clouds of glory. The instinct of beauty is an echo of the Divine. Truly does George Eliot say, "Our still rapture under the influence of autumn sunsets, or pillared vistas, or calm majestic statues, or Beethoven's symphonies, all bring with them the consciousness that they are mere waves and ripples in an unfathomable ocean of love and beauty." The world, in spite of the pessimists, is full of beauty, and "whatsoever things are lovely, think on these things," says St. Paul; and amidst all the lovely self-expressions of the Intelligence of God, in mineral and crystal, in seas and hills and plains, in the whole order of animal life, there is nothing more beautiful, or that affords a more fascinating study, than the birds. To him who will not "behold the birds," human life is deprived of one of its refining and stimulating influences; to study and love even the birds of London, to hear

the coo of the wood-pigeon and the song of the thrush in our London parks, mingling with the ceaseless throb of the heart of this giant city, is to bring "thoughts that lie too deep for tears" and to realise the unity of life on the planet, for—

"'Tis always morning somewhere, and above
The awakening continents from shore to shore,
Somewhere the birds are singing evermore."

But it is obvious that the greatest Teacher the world has ever known did not speak this injunction only upon the emotional plane. "Behold," He says, "the birds"! Why? Because, secondly, these feathered thoughts of God, these restless, beautiful, ethereal expressions of the one life immanent in the Universe, appeal to the intellect by suggesting certain facts as to the Divine order of the evolution of life upon this planet. Creation is the self-expression of the Supreme Intelligence in all beautiful forms of created life. The foundation principle of this self-expression is that orderly progression from lower to higher that we call evolution. This orderly progression is divided in the first chapter of Genesis into periods, called after a well-known Hebrew idiom, days. The fifth of these periods of orderly progression called

days is remarkable for the appearance on this planet of the higher forms of life culminating with the birds. And a careful study of the fossil remains in the earth-strata of this particular geological period, has exactly corroborated the sequence of the evolution of life on this planet, as recorded in the first chapter of Genesis. There lived once in America a clever aggressive freethinker who published a work upon what he called "the mistakes of Moses." This classing together of the fishes and the birds, and separating them by a vast period from the mammalia and from man, was one of these so-called "mistakes of Moses." Now, by "beholding the birds," that is, by scientifically and laboriously investigating them, their origin, and their evolution, through the testimony of geology, research has silenced the mockers and demonstrated that the order of creative evolution given in the Book of Genesis is literally and scientifically accurate.

"Behold the birds." Behold the fossil traces of the birds. See how and when they came. There is a magnificent wall of rock not far from Mont Blanc 9,000 feet in height, which consists of a mass of petrified creatures belonging to the geological period of the fishes. It has been thrown up by some

mighty convulsion of Nature millions of years ago from the bottom of the sea. It is filled with fossil remains of enormous monsters of the deep, lizards and fish in such profusion, that the place is called Les Diablerets, from the old legend of times of ignorance, when it was imagined that these fossil fishes must have been collected there as the sport of fiends; but amidst this profusion of fossils there is not the slightest trace of the remains of the terrestrial creatures of the later periods of creative evolution or of man.* But, further, in the strata immediately succeeding these deposits are found the first traces of birds, showing that they were evolved exactly in the order given in the Scripture record. The last of the great sea monsters is the pterodactyle, apparently the transition species in the evolution of birds from fishes, for the pterodactyle was a flying monster with wings like a huge bat, doubtless the origin of the legendary dragon. Physical investigators have now discovered the closest resemblance between the fishes and the birds, in anatomical structure and natural characteristics. Both spring from eggs, both fly, the one in the water with fins, the others in the air with wings; when microscopically tested the blood corpuscles and globules of fishes and birds

* Cf., *passim*, "Moses and Geology," by Dr. Samuel Kinns.

are found to be identical and differing wholly from the blood globules of the animals of the later periods. The discovery of the Archæopteryx in the upper oolite formation seems to supply the missing link. Though genuinely a bird and not a reptile, it differs from all known birds in the reptile-like structure of its tail and in possessing reptiles' claws upon its wings. This absolutely unique fossil specimen, named the Archæopteryx, may be seen in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington. The gradual stages of the evolution of species, through the long ages, baffle the calculations of the human mind, but in the later geological formations of this period are recorded the *first* clear footprints of birds in the new red sandstone of the Connecticut valley. In the British Museum there is a slab eight feet by six, of this geological period, brought from Massachusetts, covered with footprints of birds, some of them small wading birds, others of birds of gigantic size equal to twice the stature of the ostrich.

Thus, then, to "behold the birds" in the fossils is to corroborate the accuracy of the order of creation in Genesis, and also to discover the most important link in the doctrine of evolution, that most recent and most fertile discovery in biology. The link

is important, for at one time it was considered impossible that the birds should have been evolved from the reptiles. There is little likeness between a tortoise and a swallow, but the study of comparative anatomy has revealed a remarkable fact; it is that the forces which combine for the moulding of organic forms, or as I should prefer to call it the Divine Intelligence which is self-evolving in the universe, invariably follows one predetermined type, and that practically the skeletons of all animals, however widely different in appearance, are on one universal plan. The fingers on your hand are in the wing of the bird; more, they are distinctly traceable in the anatomy of the solid hoof of the horse. Under the smooth surface of the creeping serpent are the distinct traces of rudimentary legs. Under the glossy skin of the common slow-worm there are discoverable the abortive traces of the blade-bone and collarbone of the monkey. Unity of design with infinite variety of function seem to point to a central evolving Intelligence, slowly advancing all to a predetermined purpose, and the slightest impulse of the evolving Intelligence in one direction, or withholding it in another, could, without contradicting natural law or violating anatomical structure, merge one species into

another. Be this as it may, the accurate reading of the geological record has demonstrated that the Semitic seer, whoever he was, who, in his vision of the six nights, paraphrased the far older records of the baked-clay tablets of Chaldea into the first chapter of Genesis, was at any rate guided into accuracy as to the sequence of life on this planet, and this sequence has been corroborated by obeying, on the Intellectual plane, our Lord's injunction "Behold the birds."

But I said that, thirdly, the injunction "Behold the birds" lifted the human mind above the material by stimulating the spiritual capacity, and that the spiritual capacity expressed itself in the yearning cry, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away and be at rest." Possibly it was in recognition of this inward spiritual significance that the first blessing recorded in the Bible was pronounced upon the birds, and in proportion to the solemnity of this blessing must surely be the impiety of cursing what God has blessed. And curse them we do, emphatically, when we imprison our wild songsters, caught when full-grown, and see them beating out their hearts against their dungeon bars in the foul atmosphere of a gas-lit room. A caged lark in a London slum

is a veritable spirit in prison. Again, curse them we do, when we consent to the ruthless slaughter of millions of these living jewels, to pander to the senseless cruel custom of ornamenting hats and bonnets with their dead bodies. Whoever wears the skin of any bird, not legitimately killed for food, or worse, the breeding plume of the white heron, called in the trade an aigrette, should study Browning's poem "The Lady and the Painter," and know that she is—

"Clothed with the murder of one of
God's best of harmless beings."

But it is the wing, the motive power, the ascending mechanism of the bird, that suggests the analogy of our Father's promise to bring us home, and directly indicates the method of that home-bringing. "Oh that I had wings like a dove!" The cry is the utterance of the instinct of immortality, and the stirring of the ideal humanity within us, yearning to rise above the nature-life. It is the active Godward impulse of the spirit, cleaving by will and thought-power the earth atmosphere and ascending. It is the homing instinct, the "Heimweh" of immortal mortals. "Behold the birds," says our Lord; study the mystery of their homing instinct, mark how

some of our songbirds, imprisoned for our pleasure, at a certain season become restless and cease their song, and beat against the bars of their cage. Why is this? It is their consciousness of the season of migration, when the deeply implanted instinct within them awakens the longing to leave the chill shores of England for the land of song in the sunny South. It is an analogy of that inmost movement in the centre of man's being towards a better world, and a higher Power, producing those instinctive undefined longings which express themselves in the words "Oh that I had the wings of a dove! for then would I flee away and be at rest." To stimulate this migratory instinct in the soul of man (which is always elevating unless it paralyses for present service, or assumes the character of impatience with the discipline of life), to keep it vibrating, to encourage it to strain upwards, is one of the influential operations of the Holy Ghost. It is, moreover, one main intention of our Heavenly Father when He takes from us those bright existences upon whom our happiness seems to depend. That intense yearning that sometimes comes over us for those that are gone—when we long for "the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of the voice that is still," when we look upon the loved features in

some portrait and say with Cowper, "O that those lips had language! Life has gone with me but roughly since I heard thee last!"—what does it mean? It is a sign that our wings are growing, that we are being liberated from the material plane, that our heart is following our treasure. Like migratory birds we are being carried heavenwards by an irresistible force. We are responding to a loadstone that is drawing us into the spirit world. It is one of God's laws, which He has set in the inner soul of things, and blended with our own throbbing affections. It is love drawing us from Paradise, and prompts in response the cry, "Oh that I had the wings of a dove!"

The life-controlling, drawing power of these loadstones in Paradise, was once conspicuously illustrated by an incident which has since formed the subject of a hymn. A father in America had an only child, a little lad whom he idolised; he made him his treasure, and where his treasure was his heart was also, and in his love for the boy his God was forgotten. Coming home one day from his occupation as a fisherman, he anchored his smack in the offing and started for shore in his small boat. A dense fog overhung the beach. There was a surf; the channel through the rocks was tortuous. At last he

heard a clear voice through the fog crying out, "Steer straight for me, father; steer straight for me." He followed the sound, and beached his boat in safety. Soon afterwards the boy died. The bereaved father was inconsolable and rebelled in fury against God; he did not see that his treasure was taken that his heart might follow. One day the power of memory awakened; he dreamed that he heard the voice once more, this time from Paradise, crying, "Father, steer straight for me." The arrow of conviction entered his heart, and all through the life that remained to him, when afterwards as an experienced Christian he was ministering to others and preaching the Gospel, the spirit voice was ever in his ear, as a message from on high, "Steer straight for me." It is an illustration of the ceaseless beckoning, the magnetic drawing of those whom we have "loved long since and lost awhile," and who are waiting to be the first to receive us the moment we pass into the other sphere of being.

How are wings grown? Wings are grown, strengthened, perfected, only in one way, only by overcoming resistance. If the medium of resistance, the air, against which muscular force could act, were withdrawn, a bird would drop to the ground like a stone.

God's law for the ascending dove and for the ascending soul is identical; it is the law of overcoming resistance. It is in the strong gale that the white-winged seagull can soar without moving her wings; the force of gravity that would draw her downwards is counteracted by the force of the air striking against her wings: the one thing needful is right attitude. The bird must rise straight against the resistance; she must wrestle with it fair and square; every feather must be extended to meet it, and the result is an ascent into the heavens.

"Behold the birds," pleads the voice of the Incarnate Word, "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven," and was tempted in all points as we are. The birds count it all joy when they feel the buffeting of the strong west wind. "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, for the trying of your faith worketh patience"; that is, makes a man of you, forms your character, strengthens your soul-wings, hastens the time when you shall "flee away and be at rest."

The complete solution of the problem of life is virtually contained in St. Paul's well-known motto, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." There is really nothing beside this in the education of life. And when this is effected, when the spiritual

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self is more cogent than the carnal self, when "the divinity that stirs within us" dominates the humanity in which it is embodied, then, as Kingsley said at the moment of death, "No more fighting, no more fighting," then shall we have grown the wings of the dove, and we shall flee away and be at rest.

HUMAN COINS

HUMAN COINS

“ Whose is this image and superscription ? ”—MATT. xxii. 20.

THE words of no Oriental Rabbi should be considered only in their surface interpretation ; still less would it be possible thus to consider the words of One who spake as none other spake ; One who was not “ a Teacher come from God,” but God come as a Teacher ; One who was the Sacrament of the Absolute—the outward and visible sign of an Inward and Spiritual Universal Divine Immanence. It is inconceivable, therefore, that the audience, on the historic occasion of the utterance of these words, would have limited their apprehension of the reply of the Christ to His dignified demolition of the subtle dilemma intended to entrap Him. On the surface plane of interpretation, this demolition was complete, and we will glance at it before proceeding to consider the inwardness of the utterance. It was a well-conceived plot that

underlay that question, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or no?" Jerusalem was at the time notoriously riven by factions, each bitterly hating the other. The Pharisees loathed the Roman supremacy; the Herodians were the "little Englanders" of that day, and had no care beyond the local dynasty of Herod. The Imperialists accused both these other factions of disloyalty to the Cæsar. If they could have committed the wonder-working Prophet to one or other of these political parties, the gain to that party would have been great, as He appeared to have the populace on His side, and the others would have had somewhat wherewith to accuse Him. We are not particularly concerned with this long-past controversy; but the inference of the reply, on the surface plane, is obvious. The Christ of God is not a man, but all men. Jesus is the manifestation in time relations of a Sonship that is universal. The Christ of God is above all parties, because, inasmuch as He represents humanity, He includes all parties; and if a lesson is to be drawn on the surface plane, it is this: that whoever would, in the Spirit of the Christ, aim at promoting any great moral reform, must preserve himself and his cause from absolute identification with any definite political party. It was thus with the slavery abolitionists. For twenty years

they preserved their sacred cause untouched by party. The leaders who fought and won that battle in the House of Commons could not be labelled by the party whips. They refused office, dignity, emolument, equally from both sides ; their politics—"their citizenship"—was, as St. Paul says, "in heaven."

But, I repeat, it is not possible that they who heard our Lord say, "Whose is this image and superscription?" could have limited their apprehension of the utterance to the surface plane. Their possession of the Oriental habit of mind would have led their thoughts beyond the letter. They knew that the special characteristic of this Teacher was, that "without a parable spake He not unto them." They knew that it was not the first time that He had used the allegory of the coin to indicate the human race. They were, moreover, thoroughly conversant with the Hebrew Scriptures ; and when the Lord asked, "Whose is this image?" their minds would, almost automatically, have reverted to the profound declaration of human origins in the Book of Genesis, "So God created man in His own image ; in the image of God created He him." The question, then, "Whose is this image and superscription?" was an example of one of our Lord's suggestions for a thought-excursion into

the transcendent truth of the inseverability of God and man. It was a momentary lifting of the curtain that covers the mystery of man's being; it was an appeal to a Divine fact in man; it was a reiteration of His dogma, "the kingdom of heaven is within you"; it was a reaffirmation of the fact that nothing can ever really change the central current of man's purpose, and regenerate man's nature, but the clear recognition of his dignity, his responsibility, his potentiality, as possessed by God, loved by God, linked with God, nay, one with God; that if there had been brought to Jesus some utterly degraded specimen of the human race, as they brought Him that silver didrachma, and the question were asked, "Whose is the image and superscription" on this man? there could have been but one reply—"In the image of God, created He him"; and that which God hath once impressed with His image, though that image may be defaced and overlaid, can never be obliterated.

There is, I think, a threefold lesson for us, arising out of the suggested thought-excursion, in our Lord's question—theological, personal, practical. The theological lesson, from the human coin stamped with the Divine image, is one of the utmost importance as a stimulus to optimism. It is the trans-

cedent twin-truth of the Eternal humanity in God, and the Eternal Divinity in man; that inasmuch as all that is must have pre-existed, as a first principle, in the mind of the Infinite Originator, and as the highest of all that is, so far as we at present know, is man, the archetypal original of man must be in the Deity; and therefore man, however buried and stifled now in the corruptible body, is, in his inmost ego, indestructible, and inseverably linked to the Father of Spirits. Moreover, that for the purpose of Divine self-manifestation, man is as necessary to God as God is to man. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork"; but only man—mental, moral man—can declare the nature of God and show the character of God. As God's power is revealed in the wheeling planet, God's nature is revealed in the thinking man. Man is, therefore, the throne, the kingdom, the sphere, the theatre of the self-manifestation of God. We, then, are personal spirits, who have proceeded from God into matter, and "the image and superscription" of the Creative Sovereign Power, whence we came, remains for ever indelibly impressed upon our inmost ego, and must work in us, until at last, it brings us back home. Inasmuch as humanity is the chosen vehicle of the

self-unfolding of the Absolute, humanity will, through much initial imperfection, and through many changes, struggle upwards and onwards in development, until, at last, it shall be found complete in Him, and the pre-ordained purpose of the Absolute be completely fulfilled.

There follows, from this consideration, the lesson that I call the personal lesson. This ultimately irresistible evolution of the race will not be automatic, it will not be vague, it will not be impersonal, it will not be wholesale ; it will be one by one. Though it is a necessary philosophic truth, that our true ego, our imperishable centre, is in the universal, and not in the imprisonment of what we now call personality, still we always shall know that "I am I, and no one else." "With God," said De Tocqueville, "each one counts for one." You and I will not swing onwards in a vague, impersonal stream called "the race." Each one of us is a responsible, moral being, and a responsible moral being, perfected, purified, tested and found faithful, is not machine-made, he must be grown ; he is the product of evolution ; and, for the purposes of evolution, he must emerge triumphant from resistance, as the blade of wheat emerges triumphant from clay and stones. In other words,

he must be exposed to what, with our present imperfect knowledge, we call evil. Temptation is an inexorable law of moral growth. When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," we are not expressing a doubt of God's benevolence, we are expressing mistrust in self, consciousness of weakness. We are as children learning to swim, crying, "Lead us not out of our depth," when we well know that being led out of our depth is the inexorable law of learning to swim. And just here comes in the explanation, from the analogy of the coin, of our startling dual nature. That this educative operation of the will of the Father-Spirit may be effected, man is, by the determinate foreknowledge of God, a composite being. He possesses an inferior animal nature, a lower region of appetite, perception, imagination, tendency, and so on; in other words, to carry on the analogy used by our Lord, *there is a reverse side to the coin*. Now, let me emphasise that analogies are never meant to be pressed too hard. The most inspired allegory, from the most sacred lips, will break down if it be overstrained. But to every current coin there is a reverse side; and when you are looking at that side you cannot see the King's image. Generally, on the reverse side there is some device representing a myth, or

tradition, or national characteristic. For example, on the reverse side of this denarius, or silver didrachma, that they brought to our Lord, was a representation of Mercury with the Caduceus. Hold in your hand an English sovereign; study it. Think of our Lord's analogy, and let the mind wander back into the unthinkable past, and consider the ages that that sovereign has been in the making; the precipitation of the chemical constituents of gold, in prehistoric times, when the planet was emerging from the fiery womb that bore it; the forcing of the metal into the cells of the quartz, under the incalculable pressure of the contracting cooling world; the ages upon ages of concealment in the depths of the earth; the discovery of the metal, and all that was implied; the toil of the miners, the smelting, the refining, the alloying; and, at last, the stamping with the image and superscription of the reigning sovereign. And now it is an essential item in the economy of a great empire. It is legal tender; no man may refuse it in payment. At his peril does any man clip it, or take from its weight. The image and superscription of the reigning sovereign gives it its dignity, its sphere of usefulness, even its name. Now turn it over; you can no longer see the image of the King. What is this on the reverse side?

Another device—an heraldic design, symbolical of the traditions and myths of the nation; a transition from the real to the illusory—a representation of St. George fighting the Dragon. “Whose is this image and superscription?” Whose handiwork is this? Did you ever examine closely the reverse side of a sovereign? Close to the date you will see the minute capital letters “B. P.” Not one person in a thousand has ever seen these initials; they have not looked for them. They are the initials of Benedetto Pistrucci, the talented chief engraver to the Mint, in the reign of George III., the designer of the coin which Ruskin said was the most beautiful coin in Europe—the English sovereign. Carry on the analogy, always remembering that analogies are only meant to give play to thought. Who is the “Benedetto Pistrucci” who has stamped the reverse of every human coin with the mythical designs of our human imagination, the pleasing illusions of our natural self-life, the device of our outer and common humanity, the conditions of our flesh and blood existence? Do you say, “The devil”? Oh no, surely not the devil; this mythical, demonised, objectification, called the devil, is greatly in the way of clear thought, and is far too convenient a scapegoat. St. Paul is careful to point out, in Romans viii.,

that it is not the devil. He says man was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by God. The same die that stamped the King's image stamped the reverse of the coin. No, the initials on the reverse side of the human coin are the initials of human heredity—the qualities of temperament, which belong to the region of animal life-power. We have had "fathers of our flesh," the Apostle reminds us. They have transmitted to us, by human generation, tendencies appertaining to corporeal life. There is nothing to be ashamed of in these tendencies in themselves; they are all within the majestic lines of nature. Obviously, if we concentrate all our attention on the reverse side of the coin, we are apt to forget that the King's image is on the other side. We can only see one side at a time; and while we gaze at the reverse side, and the other side is hidden, doubt, depression, pessimism, are the inevitable result. What is the moral of the analogy? It is this: the inevitable inaccuracy of human judgments; the need for caution in our verdicts. First, as to ourselves. Remember, you cannot see both sides of the coin at once. When you are discouraged by the striving of the animal nature, and utterly disgusted with yourself, and hating yourself as wholly unregenerate, the noblest exercise of your

mental faculty is to force yourself to *turn over the coin of yourself*; turn away your attention from the "Benedetto Pistrucchi" side, and think intensely into the other side. Say, "But I am the Lord's; His image is stamped on me. His life is in me. His eternal purpose is my perfection. My true ego is His Divine Spirit." And such thought becomes creative; it restores the equilibrium; it helps the atonement—the at-one-ment of the two sides of the coin, of the human and the Divine, making, as the Apostle says, "of the twain one new man." Secondly, in our judgments of others. Here again, remember, we cannot see both sides of the coin at once, and therefore our judgments are literally one-sided. Our heroes are not deserving of all the worship we give them; our villains are not as black as we paint them. Our hero has his "Benedetto Pistrucchi" clearly enough impressed on his reverse side; and he would be the first to deprecate your praise, and assure you he was a man of like passions with yourself. And as for our villains, they live before us, and before all men, with the reverse side up; we are sick and sore and depressed at the ceaseless exhibition of the animal nature. I can only say that I have never honestly tried to turn over a human coin of this description without finding the

King's image—often much defaced and covered with accretions, but always there. If asked of the most degraded, "Whose is this image?" I should not hesitate in my reply. One of the most striking letters in my possession is one from a murderess—a peculiarly cold-blooded murderess, too. It was written just before execution, with no possibility of gaining anything by hypocrisy, and no motive for conciliation; and its perfect acquiescence in the penalty, and striking unselfishness, proved to me conclusively that that human coin was now turned over. And the conclusion of this thought is—Stay, when thou art tempted utterly to despise thy brother man; the name of thy Eternal Father is impressed on his true ego. That Divine name is inextinguishable. In the end it will save him, "yet so as by fire."

There remains the practical lesson, which scarcely needs enforcement. "Whose is this image and superscription?" asks the Head of humanity of the human items that make up the race. A recognition of the truth underlying the question would prove to be the golden key which would unlock all the great social problems of the age. I believe that all the prominent evils which degrade humanity would pass away before it, and the kingdoms of the world would become the

kingdoms of our Lord. If the answer were clearly and intelligently given to the question, "Whose is this image and superscription?" and it were recognised that God is the self-evolving image in all, it would break down the prejudices which now divide the race. These prejudices are too many to enumerate. But think of the colour prejudice, which clings so tenaciously to white races—positively, in one great continent, amounting to a serious national peril. Did the Creative Soul only impress His image on white men? Was not the historical Adam a red man? Was not our Lord Himself, in spite of Holman Hunt's beautiful conceptions, probably of a dark race? Much remains to be said upon this point. Science assures us that the five races—white, black, brown, yellow, and red—are the same in body, mind, and soul. St. Paul declares that there is neither Jew nor Greek; for all are one in Christ Jesus. At present the practice of European Christianity differs widely from the conclusions both of science and St. Paul. Think, again, of international prejudice—the insular prejudice of the British born, teaching him to despise all that is not English, to look upon all foreigners as enemies. Again, think of class prejudice, separating English people more widely than caste separates in India. The universality of the

Divine impress should surely teach us to care more for others. To know that humanity is God's child, though it has a side weighted with crime, brutality, and degradation, should make us more ready to associate ourselves with all ameliorating work in a vast sin-cursed city like London ; and it should be one of our resolutions for the new year to be definitely in touch with some remedial agency. Our Lord once drew a vivid and significant picture of a search for a lost coin, where the same inwardness of interpretation underlay the analogy. He rather implied that it was our fault, the fault of the Church, that the coin was lost. He suggested that we should light a candle, and stir up the dust from the unswept floor of our distorted social conditions, and actively, aggressively search for His God-stamped human coins till we found them. That this is the line of least resistance, the line of highest education, and the road to the ultimate greatest happiness, is implied in the conclusion of that allegory of the lost coin, where the successful searcher is represented as calling upon all friends and neighbours to rejoice with her, for she has found the coin which she had lost. That is the true credential for the higher life, for "heaven is not heaven to one alone. Save thou one soul, and thou mayest save thine own."

THE CHRIST, BOTH SON AND LORD
OF THE HUMAN HEART

THE CHRIST, BOTH SON AND LORD OF THE HUMAN HEART

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”—COL. i. 27.

THIS sentence contains the whole philosophy of Christianity in the fewest possible words. It declares and emphasises the peculiar departure which differentiates Christianity from all the self-revelations of the Eternal, which have been continuous and progressive, from the beginning of the world. Moreover, it is the full unfolding of the sublime truth foreshadowed in the conversation between our Lord and the Pharisees recorded in the Gospel for the eighteenth Sunday after Trinity, and lying hid in that question, “What think ye of the Christ—whose Son is He?”

Why did He put that question? Obviously not to puzzle, or to confound, or to exhibit dialectical skill. He loved the stubborn hearts to whom He was appealing. He could only

have desired to stimulate thought, to kindle imagination ; so He says, "What think ye?" How important is the bearing of that "What think ye?" upon growth in grace and knowledge. Intellect and spirit are by some supposed to possess separate provinces and unshared capacities, and they are so far on different planes that no spiritual revelation can be limited by the laws of mathematics. But, though the analogy is weak and imperfect, intellect is to spirit what the indicating machine in the telegraph clerk's office is to electricity. Intellect is the dial-plate upon which spirit manifests, and whereby the man judges, and, after judging accepts or rejects the indications of spirit. Here, by our Lord's words, intellect and spirit are shown in their true harmony and relative positions. Judgment, He implies, will be clear and correct when the thinker is in the spirit. The telegraph dial will mark correctly when there is no obstruction to the flow of the current.

Let us consider the question, "If David calleth Him Lord, how is He his son?" Superficially, upon the earth plane, they could easily have answered the question. They might have pointed out that there was no paradox in a son becoming lord to his own father. The history of their nation

provided them with examples. Joseph, Saul, David, each became lord of his own father. That the Pharisees did not answer in that strain is proof positive that they dimly recognised something profounder in the question. David, when he wrote the 110th Psalm (and whether he wrote it or not does not affect the argument, for our Lord always based His teachings upon the current beliefs), was king. It is clear he could not have meant by "my Lord" any earthly ruler over himself. As an inspired seer, he was uttering words with a deep and esoteric meaning. "The Lord," Jehovah, said unto Adonai, "my Lord"—that is, the Absolute said unto its manifestation; the Universal said unto the conditioned. It was a kind of dream prophecy of the embodiment of the Universal Spirit in one chosen member of the Hebrew race of the family of David, which was to take place in the fulness of time, and which theologically we speak of as the Incarnation. Therefore, the "my Lord" of the 110th Psalm is the universal Soul under human conditions, the phenomenon we name Jesus; and this gave the answer to the lawyer's question which preceded the question of our Lord. It is not the illimitable, undefinable Soul of the universe that any man can love with all his heart, strength, and mind, but

the universal Soul embodied as Divine humanity and human divinity, actively helping, practically loving. This is the true Lordship of these earth conditions. It is the spirit and power of helpfulness. Plutarch tells us that "Κυριος," the Greek for "Lord," is derived from a Persian word signifying the sun as the universal benefactor; and our English terms "Lord" and "Lady" are from the Anglo-Saxon "Hlafod"—from Hlaf, a loaf—meaning those who have the means to minister to the needs of others. When our Lord's credentials were questioned by His forerunner, it was not to power that the Master appealed, but to helpfulness—"The blind receive their sight; the lame walk." When a ruler ceases to be a benefactor, his Lordship is at an end, except in name. No single truth in the Divine character has been more clearly revealed by the Incarnation than this, that only in love, sympathy, and helpfulness is true Lordship. Therefore, the "my Lord" of the 110th Psalm is Jesus.

Then follows the question, "Whose Son is He? If David called Him Lord, how is He his son?" The Pharisees missed the awakening power of the question, because intellect was not illuminated by spirit. Whose Son is He? Think of the tons' weight of controversial, theological literature that

in twenty centuries that question has created. Think of the bitter strife between Arius and Athanasius; of the foolish, wicked persecutions for definitions which have arisen from it. Every man, confronted with the Christian revelation of God, is sooner or later challenged with the question, "What think ye of this unique Personality?" "Whose Son is He?" What is the answer? I mean the answer esoterically. I do not mean Strauss' answer, or Renan's answer, or Goethe's answer, or even the answer of legitimate dogmatic theology. They all represent a portion of the truth on the superficial plane.

Whose Son is He? He never called Himself the Son of David, though He once stopped when a blind beggar thus addressed Him. He never once called Himself the Son of Mary, and never once addressed her as mother. He called Himself the Son of Man, the Son of Humanity, the unique manifestation in human history of the Sonship which is germinal in every human being born into the world; the embodiment, for purposes of recognition and observation, of the Divine Logos or Reason of the Creator, which is the inmost life in all. The Christ, therefore, though temporarily individualised as a manifestation in time relations of an

eternal truth, is not one man but the archetypal specimen of the Sonship of all men; and the future Christ of God will not be one man, but all men in Him. He, His life, His character, His indwelling power, must be born in every man, and become gradually the Lord of every man. He must be both Son and Lord of every heart that He educates, purifies, sanctifies, and saves. "Whosoever shall do the will," He says, "the same is My mother." I have been born in his heart as truly as I was born of Mary; nay, more truly, in proportion as spiritual things are more true than natural. The answer, therefore, of the thoughtful Christian to the question, "What think ye of the Christ—whose Son is He?" would be something like this, varying with the personal equation of each. I think He is to the Universal Soul what light is to the sun, not something separate, but the revealer, the forth-bringer of what the sun is. And as to the question, "Whose Son is He?" He is our hearts' Son, as well as our hearts' Lord. Our inmost being has been a womb to bear Him; our human heart is His cradle; our human body His temple. "The Lord" (the Universal Soul) hath said unto "my Lord" (that is, to the Christ born within me), "I will make thine enemies thy footstool," and in this

lies the irrefragable promise of ultimate perfection.

Now see how St. Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, takes all this for granted, and bases upon it man's eternal hope. This, he would say, differentiates Christianity from all the previous self-revelations of God. This is "the mystery hid from the foundation of the world"—that the secret of human life is the Christ-nature in man "the hope of glory"; not in a chosen few, but in man. The objective personality called the Christ is the visible embodiment of an attribute and potentiality which belongs to all; and that attribute and potentiality is the Divine ray enshrined within all; the Sonship germinal in all, and in the fulness of time to be born in all; for Christ is the Son of man, of humanity; and the imperishable secret of human life is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

And what ought to be the effect upon the human mind, perplexed with the problems of existence, bewildered by narrow limitations, of this transcendent truth? First, emancipation from the necessity of believing in a God for whom apology is constantly necessary; relief from the restlessness arising from the narrow conceptions of Deism; assurance that the Creative Soul is not the

objective despot described in parts of the Old Testament, but the Self-communicating, Self-evolving, Responsible Spirit of Love, slowly working out a perfect and irrevocable purpose. Secondly, a nobler conception of man, as a complex being thought into existence by the Eternal Mind, and in whom God-consciousness is immanent, waiting to be born from above, that it may build the man into God's ideal. And thirdly, a broader realisation of the brotherhood of the race as a corporate unity, an organic whole, in which each ought to do for all what he alone does best. Moreover, to realise even the fringe of this profound truth, that the Christ-nature is both the Son and the Lord of the Eternal Kingdom of Heaven within man, is to face life and its perplexities with imaginations quickened and senses new-born. It is to perceive that the need of the soul is not so much conversion as evolution—evolution of a deeply hidden germ, whose power of ultimately conquering every hostile environment is involved in its very nature; a germ that under watchful culture will grow until at last—"perhaps far off at last" with many of us—it will arrive at perfection; and this conviction should cheer and illuminate those inevitable periods of depression and self-depreciation of which we are all conscious.

Growth is slow; there is no hurry in evolution. The God within is making us, and making us slowly, as is His wont. We are His workmanship, and His mills grind slowly. But God's life in man is man's unfailing assurance and strong consolation; and we can bear with our poor, infirm, temptable, suffering human nature under the glorious motto, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

One important consideration remains. The secret of the evolution of the "Christ in you, the hope of glory," is not, so to speak, correspondence with environment, but victory over environment. And the environment of the "Christ in you" is the ordinary animal nature, with its natural and urgent cravings. This deeper recognition of eternal truth, so far from emancipating from struggle, makes new demands; and every approach to similarity with the Perfect Specimen of the race will bring with it a deeper consciousness of the conflict and the contrast. The peculiar dignity of humanity is, that its evolution depends upon co-operation with the stirrings of the Divine nature. That is where we mostly fail. Even Ovid, the pagan poet, saw this, and wrote, "We see the best, and do the worst." Goethe, who was a profound thinker and teacher, used to point us to the vegetable world, and say, "Let the plants

teach thee ; do thou consciously what they do automatically." You might quote St. Paul, to the black, ugly seed of the sunflower, and say, "The potentiality of the splendid bloom you are to become is in you the hope of glory."

But we are conscious ; with us, though the germ is Divine, the cultivation is human. That is why we are here ; that is why we are tempted ; and it is a solemn thought that though we can never kill the Divine germ, we can check and thwart, and smother, and hinder it, to our own inexpressible loss ; without at least as much freedom as this, moral growth would not be possible.

What, then, in conclusion, can I say to myself and to you ? First, this : I am more and more convinced that the secret of the growth of the Christ in you is the practice of quick mental concentration, in every moral crisis, upon the Presence in which we "live, and move, and have our being." Witness, in the hidden lives of the greatest men, the strengthening effect of this practice. Such men will make what we call mistakes (though there are no mistakes in the full purpose of God—the mistakes are part of the purpose, and men and nations learn as much by their mistakes as by their successes). They may make mistakes ; but they are kept in perfect peace, because their minds are stayed on Him.

In "The Life of Mr. Gladstone" by Mr. John Morley, the biographer has given us glimpses, from Mr. Gladstone's most private diary, of this ceaseless lifting up of the heart, always, everywhere, in every crisis. It was his custom when waiting to catch the Speaker's eye, in the House of Commons, to occupy the interval in intense mental prayer. On one occasion, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, before rising to make his first great budget speech, his lips were observed moving. Members might have thought he was rehearsing his figures. His diary tells us what he was doing. He was murmuring the words of the Psalmist, "Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; give Thy strength to Thy servant, and help the son of Thy handmaid."

Secondly, I would say, the truest evidence that I know of the reality of this life is that sense of common love, that thrill of common sympathy, that leads you to care for others and to work for others. Determine that the world shall be somewhat the better that you are living in it, and you will be giving practical outward expression to that "mystery hid from the foundation of the world"—

"CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY."

EASTER

EASTER

“Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be.”—1 COR. xv. 36.

THERE are three special climaxes of folly held up prominently to reprobation in the inspired record; they are Atheism, Sensualism, and Religious Materialism.

It is worthy of something more than a mere passing consideration that the unceasing widening of the thoughts of men has tended to emphasise and illuminate each one of them.

The first declares that “The fool hath said in his heart there is no God”; and unceasing research, the fearless pursuit of the laws regulating sequences, and the scientific disproof of spontaneous generation, have cleared away ten thousand cobwebs, and solemnly endorsed the saying of the Psalmist with the Amen of science.

Since the days of the Psalmist a mass of

evidence has been accumulated to prove that man with his mental mechanism of consciousness, memory, and will, and his bodily apparatus of life-weaving organs, is not the product of chance, and although men may, and do, say that God is unknowable, and speak of themselves as agnostics, in the present generation a man who commits himself to the statement "there is no God," dubs himself a fool, and the man who reverently and seriously looks the God of Nature in the face is on the road to the Abba Father and his heavenly home.

The second is contained in Christ's picture-lesson of the prosperous agriculturist who addresses himself in soliloquy, and declares he has much goods laid up for many years and means to enjoy himself. He is the selected sample of unreasoning sensualism; he has forgotten that the outward natural life of man is not his truest life; he ignores even the purely human principle expressed by Goethe in his well-known words, "earnestness is life," which signifies that a man, worthy of the name of man, cultivates his mental faculties, realises his solidarity with humanity, develops his higher aspirations, if only to increase his enjoyment in this wonderful planet; above all, he has forgotten that every human being is practically under

sentence of death, though with the day of his execution concealed, and that within twenty-four hours of him may be that dark, strange somewhat that arrests all human hope; and so our Lord implies that a man who lives a merely sensual life, putting out of consideration physical death and that which comes after, is a fool. "Thou fool," He says, "this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

The third is St. Paul's rebuke to religious materialism when applied to the doctrine of the resurrection, which materialism has been a stumbling-block to thousands, and has supplied arguments to much of the scepticism of our time. Being far in advance of the average standard of the age in which he lived, St. Paul knew that the particles of matter out of which the flesh body is woven constantly enter upon new phases of existence, pass from animal to animal, from vegetable to animal, from animal back to vegetable, can be analysed, decomposed, recombined; and he saw that the doctrine of the permanence of distinct individuality after death would be jeopardised if made to depend upon the recovery of the separate particles of the flesh body; he therefore says emphatically in reply to a supposed questioner, "Thou fool, thou sowest not that body that shall be."

The great lesson of the Resurrection of the

Elder Brother is the assurance afforded by the survival of the representative Perfect member of the race, of the non-finality of physical death. His appearances during the forty days are no argument for the reconstitution of the natural body, and no analogy of the ordinary condition of disembodied humanity; they were obviously intended to convince His disciples of the continuity of His individuality. They were materialisations, gradually becoming more and more etherealised and unearthly, until at the last appearance on the mountain of Galilee some were unable to recognise Him. They prove to us the deathless endurance of the ego; that our beloved dead are still living; and, as Tennyson says—

“Eternal form shall still divide
The Eternal soul from all beside,
And I shall know him when we meet.”

In considering the question of the resurrection of the body, we are dealing, of course, with the right interpretation of Scripture and not with the possibilities of Omnipotence. We are not prepared to deny that God could, if He pleased, recall the disintegrated atoms of the particular body in which we each one die, from the multitude of changes through

which it would have passed, and rebuild them around our souls and spirits. It is possible in chemistry to disintegrate atoms and recombine them. You can dissolve a silver ornament in sulphuric acid and it shall disappear; but if you treat the acid with chloride of sodium it will precipitate the silver and it can be collected and re-made by a jeweller into the facsimile of the ornament you had destroyed; the same yet not the same. That which is possible, in a measure, to chemistry cannot be impossible with God. But the fact is that Scripture nowhere says that the material natural body shall rise again. Where passages in Scripture appear to lend colour to this view, you will find that they all refer to the rising of nations or individuals out of the grave of degradation and sin.

In Job ix. 7 we read: "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more," clearly referring to the flesh body which is buried. The promise of the Scriptures is the permanence of the individuality. "Thy brother," says the Lord Jesus to Martha, "shall rise again"; "To-day," He said to the penitent thief on the cross, "shalt thou," the conscious being, the real man, the individual with thought,

memory, and will, "shalt thou be with Me in paradise"; the body of that malefactor was burning in the valley of Hinnom while his individuality was in Paradise. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus we read that the "beggar died and was carried"—not a part of him, but his entire self—"was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." In the image of the grain sown and the shoot springing up, the Apostle has taught us the relations between the literal flesh in which we breathe now and the spiritual body of the resurrection life. Every one who has ever sown a seed and watched it grow knows that that which comes up is not that which was sown; the outer portion of the seed dies, putrifies, mingles with the earth, but from within arises the green vivid shoot, moving mountains.

Thus it is with the earthly body which is adapted for our training here; when it has done its work it dies, decays, putrifies, mingles with the elements around; but from within, the man, the real man, rises into the life everlasting, not out of the grave, but out of the body (death is the rising of the spiritual body), the essential identity the same, the sensible materials changed; the same corporeal individuality, not the same integral atoms. The analogy which more perhaps

than any other shows to me how a principle of identity may be made manifest by falling atoms that are constantly changing is that of the rainbow stretched across the sky in its majesty of blending prismatic hues. It appears fixed and substantial and solid, but that which you see is composed of nothing but falling atoms ; though it seems immovable, it is, every particle of it, in perpetual flux, and is changed a thousand times. The mass of falling drops make the glorious colours visible ; when those falling drops cease to fall the rainbow is gone, though the beam of light remains. What the falling, shifting drops are to the rainbow, that, in a sense, for purposes of analogy, the changing, shifting atoms of these flesh bodies are to the spirit and soul of man ; its vehicle, its manifestation, that without which you would not see it. When they separate into their component elements and seek new combinations (that is, when the man, as we express it, dies) you cannot see him any more, but he is as really in being as the beam of light is in being though the rainbow has departed.

I cannot but believe that one stronghold of the religious materialism rebuked by St. Paul is to be discovered in the customary methods of disposing of human bodies after death. Half the epitaphs on tombstones are

sheer materialism. I grant that the emotion is purely natural, but the natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit. There is no agony on earth greater than watching the ebb of vital power in some human being whom you have deeply loved, to note the failing of speech, movement, hearing, eyesight; to listen to that laboured breathing, growing more and more intermittent, until there comes a long last breath and there is none after it. What more natural than that we should bend over that loved form in the bitterness of our anguish, and treat it as though it were still what it had been? What more natural than that we should cling to that shell that we have known and lavish upon it our affection? Natural, but not Spiritual! It savours of a materialistic disbelief in the survival of individuality apart from the body. When we clearly realise that resurrection is not a return to flesh life, like the re-imprisonment of the spirit of Lazarus, or the sending back into earth conditions of the widow's son of Nain; when we possess the promise of God to the effect that, when this mortal tenement is destroyed, the spirit will find itself a dweller in a brighter, better mansion, a house not made of the grosser matter which we now animate; when we believe that the spirit

body asserts itself as the nature body falls away, then we are in a condition to consider dispassionately the various methods of disposing of these worn-out chrysalises from which our spiritual bodies have emerged.

We have seen that our identity is independent of our shells, therefore "thou sowest not that body that shall be"; how then shall these atoms be most suitably resolved into their elements? Personally I look forward to the time when the process of cremation, or the dissolution of the elements of the natural body by the agency of fire, shall be universally adopted.

The days are fast approaching when this method of the disposal of the dead will become inevitable from a sanitary point of view; the immense and rapid increase of the population of the world is every year intensifying the difficulty of the disposal of these used-up material bodies of ours. We are accumulating in our midst a vast store of human remains in every stage and condition of decay, threatening to pollute our water supply and affect the air we breathe, a dishonour to the memory of the departed, and a menace to the health of the living.

Moreover, burial, even where accomplished after the true method of earth to earth, and not in the mischievous and costly contrivance

of leaden coffins, does not destroy, but liberates, preserves, and distributes the germs of disease, while fire destroys them; and I cannot but believe that if the body of every person who died of disease were burnt soon after death, diseases that are called zymotic (those which are propagated by germs) would pass away, from the literal destruction of the germs.

The sentimental feeling against this method of dissolution and redistribution of the elements of the body is not founded on mature reasoning. There is surely less honour in that festering mass of corruption in the coffin, than in the clean, purifying action of the element of fire. The so-called religious feeling was well disposed of by the reply of the great and good Lord Shaftesbury; he said "thousands of martyrs from the days of Diocletian and Nero to the times of the Spanish Inquisition and the cruelties of Mary and Elizabeth had been burnt to ashes, and he was quite prepared to share his probabilities of personal immortality with such saints of God as they."

But beyond all other reasons I should welcome cremation as a powerful protest against religious materialism; as a national acknowledgment of the indestructibility of human individuality; as inculcating the true

view of resurrection as taught by our Lord when He argued with the Sadducees that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had virtually risen again, because they were still alive though in another condition of being.

There is a further consideration of the utmost importance arising from Christ's revelation that death is the liberation from earth conditions of the spiritual part of man. "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body." The best definition of the spiritual body is the "non-atomic ethereal enswathement of the spirit." This is being formed within us now; we are in the process of making this enswathement which will enclose us like a character in the age which will open upon us when this body is laid aside. We are in a certain sense now developing ourselves. It was not the death of the body, the physical body, that was the doom of sin; death was on the planet thousands of years before the accepted date of the history of the fall: "In the day thou eatest thou shalt die"; but Adam's physical body lived nearly one hundred years after the day on which he ate. Again, Christ lived, died, and rose to save us from the doom of sin, but He has saved no man from physical death, so this is not the doom—it is some process called spiritual death that is the doom

of sins; and every evil principle that we entertain and wilfully encourage deepens and strengthens this spiritual decrepitude; every secret sin, or low malignant action, in which we permit ourselves wounds and defiles and weakens the spiritual part of us. Eternal life, spiritual life (in this sense) must be won and woven by effort, conflict, suffering, integrity, right choice. Just as we only exist physically by resisting the adverse forces in surrounding Nature, so we can only exist and grow spiritually as we conquer our spiritual enemies, and make our daily choice between gratification and duty.

But the Christian doctrine of resurrection believed, grasped, has brought a new power into human life; a power which can stimulate the imagination, invigorate the will, purify the affections, and quicken into life the languor of despair. It is the voice which says, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." Believe in the personal continuity of that tender, loving life, and that it is yours. This is not a sentiment, but a fact. "He that liveth and *believeth* on Me," He said, "shall never die." Believing does not mean externally accepting some fact in history. Try it; live one whole day consciously in His presence with your inmost heart open to Him, with every spiritual

faculty lifted up to Him, and it will quench the fire of desire, ennoble your dealings with your fellow-men, cement your hidden relationship to God, and develop the inmost spiritual nature. What food is to your atomic body, that Christ is to your spiritual nature. As you feed on Him in prayer, in aspiration, in imitation, above all in Holy Communion, He builds you up in His own likeness. "Only believe," said Jesus; but really to believe is to act. Believe that the Christ-nature, the germ of sonship, is in you; let your forth-putting meet God's in-working; believe that you are "predestined to be conformed to the image" of the pattern Son, and work in His power to make that calling and election sure. Say to Him—

"I would arise in all Thy strength,
My place on earth to fill,
To work out all my time of war
With love's unflinching will.

Shine on, Thou Resurrection Light,
Upon our sorrows shine;
The fulness of Thy joy be ours,
As all our griefs were Thine.

Now in this changing, dying life,
Our faded hopes restore;
Till in Thy triumph perfected,
We taste of death no more."

IMMORTALITY

IMMORTALITY

“This mortal must put on immortality.”—1 COR. xv. 53.

THIS authoritative revelation, recorded in the sacred literature, though as part of the funeral service it is reminiscent of some of the saddest moments of our lives, challenges the hearts of men on All Saints' Day with a dogmatic declaration of assurance. Many a stricken heart, after laying all that was mortal of a loved one in the darkness of the tomb, has cried out, somewhat blindly and tentatively—

“Can a finite thing created in the bounds of time and
space,
Can it live and grow and love Thee, catch the glory of
Thy face,
Fade and die, be gone for ever, know no being, have
no place?”

And revelation gives back the answer, clearly, authoritatively—No! for “this mortal must

put on immortality." Indestructible personal identity is, then, the solemn thought of All Saints' Day, and its first application is naturally to the being and condition of those whom we have seen pass away into the night and their place know them no more. For myself, I believe that communion of spirit with those who have passed from this sphere of being to another is an essential reality. Its guarantee is the common possession of an indestructible life, its operation, though as indefinable as the passage of brain waves, is through love and affinity. God is Love, and Love is God; and Love, that has been begotten and welded by the simultaneous passage of hearts through the multitudinous experiences of this earth-life, is as immortal as God, and "the gates of Hades" cannot prevail against it. It enlarges and liberates both mind and heart to believe in the inseparability of spirits bound together by love; to be convinced that they who loved us dearly when on earth, prayed for us unceasingly, made constant sacrifices for us, are able, in their higher conditions, in their fuller, freer, completer life, to breathe into us some quickening influence. That we are unconscious of their spiritual impact, is no proof that they are not energising for our good; we were often unconscious or un-

regardful of their loving ministries when they were on earth. Without entering into the obscure region of mental causation, we may accept it as an acknowledged fact that mind can act powerfully on mind, here on earth, irrespective of space and time, by some direct method of its own. Why limit that thought-power to the earth-sphere? Tennyson says—

“Star to star vibrates light,
So may soul to soul pierce through a finer element of
its own.”

And that they do thus pierce I am convinced.

Others, whom we have loved, have passed over manifestly in incompleteness, with capacities undeveloped, powers not yet called into exercise, faults not yet corrected. Can we do nothing to help them? Is the supreme penetrating force of love unable to reach them? Can we not, with intense purpose, with Divine aim, project ourselves mentally into the condition where they are, and, seeking identification with them, lift them up before the Father? It is our simple duty to pray for them. The objection to praying for the departed is a dreary superstition. Every time our Lord preached in a synagogue He must have taken part in prayers for the dead.

Such prayers abound in the early liturgies of the Church; and where love is real, the instinct is irresistible. The heart cries out—

“How can I cease to pray for thee? Somewhere
 In God’s great universe thou art to-day.
 Can He not reach thee with His tender care?
 Can He not hear me when for thee I pray?”

Yes, love is stronger than death, and it is stronger than narrow theological prejudice; and Tennyson was not reiterating some effete Popish superstition, he was voicing a high and noble instinct of humanity, when he wrote—

“Pray for my soul; more things are wrought
 By prayer than this world dreams of.”

To convinced believers in the Christian revelation, the direct asseveration of St. Paul is sufficient. They know that there is no death, that sundered souls will be reunited in the life of the world to come, because of the inspired declaration, “this mortal must put on immortality”; and they are content to “wait a little while in uncomplaining love.”

But there are others, not a few, who, without the slightest desire to criticise the subject matter of revelation itself, are unable to attain to this sublime spirit of confidence.

They are so constituted that logic stands as a gatekeeper before their emotional nature. They desire to obey the injunction, "Prove all things"; and they yearn continuously for some indisputable assurance that the departed are yet alive. They have laid a loved one in the grave,

"Before decay's effacing fingers
Have marred the lines where beauty lingers,"

and the silence of eternity has dropped its impenetrable veil; and the importunity of the old question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" harasses them with an urgency in proportion to their sorrow.

Now, putting the Christian revelation, for the moment, out of the question, I ask, Is there discoverable any irrefragable philosophic basis for the belief in immortality? I think there is. It is obvious that, in the consideration of this question, we shall enter into a region where phraseology is inadequate and definitions are impossible. For example, the word "immortality" is vague; the human mind cannot attain to any conception of endlessness, and the term itself is merely a negation. Even the terms that are not negations are insufficient. It is spoken of as eternal life, æonian life, the life of the ages,

the life of the world to come, and so on. Again, the expression "life" has no definition. No pathologist or psychologist can present you with a formula which is an analysis of life—vegetable, animal, or human. Many have attempted the task. "Correspondence with environment," says one; "the sum and product of the forces that resist death," says another; and the inquiring mind remains dissatisfied. The definition of St. James is equally untenable; he speaks of life as "a vapour that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away." This is as purely materialistic as the beautiful but non-Christian metaphor of Shelley—

"Life, like a dome of many coloured glass,
Stains the bright radiance of eternity,
Until death tramples it to fragments."

Moreover, St. James's definition is pure Pantheism, for vapour is precipitation into visibility of all-pervading moisture, and, when again resolved, that vapour is lost; the same vapour never again appears. This definition is not even up to the standard of the highest Indian philosophy, for a well-taught Brahmin will tell you that nirvana is not absorption into the torrent of universal life, but conscious identification with universal life, without the

loss of your own sense of individuality. If the physical investigator is thus wholly unable to present us with a definition of organic life, it is not a matter of surprise that there is no form of words that can express the reality underlying St. Paul's assurance, "this mortal must put on immortality."

Granting, then, that definition is impossible, and phraseology inadequate; that fragment of the conception which involves continuity of life beyond death, and which more immediately concerns us, is conceivable; and the fact confronts us that the materialistic theory, that man's being is only the vitality of his animal frame, has never held the thought of man in any race, country, or religion. Time forbids the consideration of the many replies, ancient and modern, which have been given to the great question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" but, before stating the philosophic argument which I believe to be irrefutable, these replies may be briefly summarised under three heads: (1) The argument from instinct; (2) the metaphysical argument; and (3) the moral argument.

The first is based upon the universality of the instinct of survival—an instinct confessedly coming under the Vincentian canon: *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*. Descartes, the greatest of the world's philo-

sophers, argues that the universality of an instinct justifies belief in the existence of that to which the instinct points. Plato, in the "Phædon," describes the debate amongst the philosophers of Greece, whether the relation of soul to body was that of harmony to a harp, or of a rower to a boat. According to the first, the music must cease when the harp is broken; according to the latter, the rower may survive when the boat is wrecked. And the whole testimony of the Greek tragedians testifies that the latter was the accepted theory. It affords an illustration of the universality of the instinct. It is expressed by Addison, in the oft-quoted words in Cato's soliloquy—

"It must be so. Plato, thou reasonest well.
 Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
 This longing after immortality?
 Or whence this secret dread and inward horror
 Of falling into nought? Why shrinks the soul
 Back on herself, and startles at destruction?"

The metaphysical argument, of which perhaps Leibnitz is the high priest, is based upon the alleged indestructibility of an uncompounded essence. He taught that the ego of man was a substance ("ousia"), and that no substance ("ousia") could perish except by the miracle of annihilation.

The moral argument is that which has, perhaps, weighed most with thinking men. It was used by Goethe; it is expressed by Tennyson; it is that the innate sense of justice in man refuses to believe that death will put an end to a development hitherto uninterrupted, and so make impossible the rectification of balances notoriously unequal in this world.

Some deep thinkers have based their conviction of the continuity of personal identity upon the mystery of the persistence of memory, though atomic flux has changed every particle of the matter of the body. Oliver Wendell Holmes told me, in Boston, that, to him, memory, as a proof of personal identity, was the strongest incidental witness to continuity. He told me: A. lent a sum of money to B. B. gave him a legal note of hand. A. lost the note of hand. B. was dishonest, and repudiated the debt. A. lost his money. The incident was closed. Twenty years afterwards, A. was bathing at Newport, Rhode Island, and was nearly drowned. In the moment of extremity his memory was abnormally awakened—he remembered where he had put the note of hand. B. was brought to justice and made to pay, with twenty years' interest. "Now," said Dr. Holmes, "where was that memory? Not in the grey

matter of the brain, for that had changed, through atomic flux, again and again, in twenty years. The true ego of man is, therefore, independent of his body, and the inference is that it can survive the body."

Now, all this is interesting as a study in human psychology; but, at its best, it is but high probability based on trains of inference, and it is unfruitful if certainty is elsewhere attainable. Is certainty elsewhere attainable? Is there an argument for immortality which does not depend on instinct, or emotion, or probability, but which is based on the clearest most unimpassioned philosophic reasoning? I contend that there is, and that it establishes its thesis on a firmer base even than scientific evidence; for even if science became satisfied with the evidences of so-called spiritualism, it would not have proved immortality, only continuity, for the beings who manifest at *séances* may be on their way to dissolution, and may, for all we know to the contrary, soon cease to exist. What, then, is the philosophic argument for immortality? It is comparatively simple and easy of apprehension. It is based on the well-known thought which pervades Newman's "Apologia," namely, the unreality of the phenomenal as compared with the essence whence phenomena arise. Let it be illustrated by a

simple analogy. An architect designs a building. His thought is creative ; he thinks out all the details in his mind, until he has the complete and finished structure in his mind's eye. He then proceeds to draw plans on paper ; his thought is uttered ; it becomes verbum, the word ; his plans are the first utterance into visibility of his thought. In course of time, through processes involving labour and delay, his thought becomes bricks and mortar, and dwells among us, and the edifice is completed. Now, I ask, where, and in what, does the reality of that building reside ? You say, "In the bricks and mortar ; we can see it, touch it, dwell in it." No, emphatically no ; the reality of that edifice is not in the bricks and mortar, it is in the mind of the architect. He has thought it as a complete whole. He cannot unthink it. Let it be burnt down, let it be burnt down a hundred times, so long as the architect lives, the true being of the building lives, irrevocably, perfectly, in his mind. Perhaps it may be burnt down before it is finished, as men die before their characters are formed. What matter ! The whole finished building is in the mind of its author ; it can at any moment be reproduced in every detail, on paper or in fact. The building is "predestined to be conformed" to the ideal image in the mind of the author. Here lies the irrefragable

philosophic basis of human immortality. Here lies the secret of man's boundless capacities. Here lies the assurance of man's ultimate perfection. The Builder and Maker of all things is God. Not the sterile and impotent conception of Deism—the objective, omnipotent, mechanical engineer; not the vague obliteration of Pantheism; but God, as the Infinite, Universal, Parent-Spirit; God as the All-diffused Individuality, evolving, under the constraint of love, that which is involved in Himself. The problem of existence is solved for him who thus believes in God. Humanity is a mode of God's thinking. Each human being is a product of His thought. Before differentiating each separate entity into a human individual, He has seen each one complete, as he will be in the end; as He thought him from the beginning. He can never unthink him. He can never, so to speak, obliterate from His mind that completed ideal that He has thought; so long as God lives, we live: we are immortal because God is immortal. Yes, we may be, as it were, burnt down before we are finished; it may take the passage of æons to complete us. The possibility of many rebuildings may be implied. We are built by the evolution of the germ of the Divine within. Evolution is a slow process, but in His mind we are as He

designed us. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Therefore, "in the knowledge of God" (not our knowledge of Him, but His knowledge of us) "standeth our eternal life." Whether in conditioned states, in Hades, or Gehenna, or Heaven, each one has his eternal being, his true self in God, from Whom into outer consciousness he has come, and to Whom he must return in the atonement or reconciliation of outward states to inmost being. Creation, has reference not to man as he is in God, but to the state of subjection, limitation, and illusion—the state that St. Paul calls "vanity"—to which man has been made subject, not willingly, but by reason of God; and which conceals his true nature until he is delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of Sonship. And that we may know our ultimate destiny, the Father-Spirit has given us a specimen of what He means to make of us, in the Archetypal Elder Brother, and we are all "predestined to be conformed to the image of the Perfect Son." Now, I ask, can any reasonable man, without doing violence to the very constitution of philosophic thought, or committing himself to the materialistic absurdity that the unconscious has produced the conscious, can he deny personal immortality? Was not Carlyle

right when he said, "The real being of whatever was, and is, and will be, is even now, and for ever. Believe it thou must"?

Two considerations remain. Let it be granted that the immortality of man is a fact, because God is immortal, and man is an expression of the thought of God; yet St. Paul says "this mortal must 'put on' immortality." It seems as though there were here a contradiction in terms. If man be immortal by creation, how can he "put on" that which he already possesses? The answer which shines forth from the inspiring truth of evolution is this: It is only because he does possess immortality that he can put it on; an acorn can only "put on" the oak, because the oak is involved in its nature; evolution can never exceed involution. It is only because immortality is involved in man's being that he can "put it on." It is thus in physical life—you say, "This child must 'put on' manhood;" the child could not "put on" manhood were not the potentiality of manhood involved in his being. Tennyson says of the infant—

"So rounds he to a separate mind
From whence clear memory may begin,
As through the frame that hems him in,
His isolation grows defined."

This is deeply, intensely true of the mental

experiences and moral struggles by which man evolves his living Divine self, and “puts on” his immortality. We confound the whole philosophy of our being when we think to attain goodness by short cuts, or talk about immediate entrance into the highest heavenly life at the moment of death. God is building thee. “We are His workmanship.” Be patient with the slowness of the evolution of the Divine nature. Keep the inmost, the life secret, whence action and emotion spring, ever open towards God, in prayer, in soul outpouring, and the Divine practice slowly, slowly, but nevertheless surely, becomes the habit of the life.

Finally, however intensely we believe in the inseparability of God and man, it is, as Byron says, “a fearful thing to see the human soul take wing.” The agony of a recent bereavement is keen and passionate, and cannot reason coolly; but it is our right and our duty not to “sorrow as those without hope.” The nearer we get to God the nearer we are to our beloved departed. It will be but a little while and we shall be reunited. Let us alter the agonising “goodbye” of bereavement into the “good-night” of expectation. Let us say when they depart—

“ Only good-night, beloved, not farewell,
A little while and all His saints shall dwell

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In hallowed union indivisible,
Good-night.

Until we meet before His throne,
Clothed in the spotless robe He gives His own,
Until we know as we are known,
Good-night."

Inasmuch as "this mortal must put on immortality," we are sure, absolutely sure, that

"With the morn the angel face will smile
That we have loved long since and lost awhile."

SPIRITUAL SIGHT

SPIRITUAL SIGHT

“A little while, and ye behold Me no more: again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father.”—ST. JOHN xvi. 16 (R.V.),

SUCH conception of the inwardness of this illimitable utterance as we are capable of forming, helps to illustrate the characteristic teaching of the great forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension of the Christ; and that teaching is the nearness, the helpfulness, the accessibility of the Universal Soul as manifested in its integrity and completeness in Jesus Christ. It must surely be of set purpose, of deliberate intention, as a stimulus to the thought and imagination of the hearer and reader, that two Greek words, capable of a subtle but important distinction of meaning, are used here in the same sentence for seeing. The distinction is ignored in the Authorised Version of the New Testament, and only partly suggested in the revised version, in the translation “A little while,

and ye behold Me no more: again, a little while, and ye shall see Me." The word "theorite," the first word, translated "behold," refers to physical sight depending on the bodily organs. The word "theorem," something to be mechanically proved, is derived from this Greek word. The word "opsesthe," the second word, translated "see," refers to perception, independent of the bodily organs. It is used of the insight of the metaphysician, of the spiritual vision of the believer, of the impressions of the clairvoyant, of the awakened intuitions of the mystic, which enable him to penetrate beyond the veil of the world of sense, and see that which is invisible. Sophocles, in the "Œdipus," constantly uses this second word, "opsesthe," of mental vision; and it is used in the New Testament more than thirty times of spiritual sight as opposed to bodily vision. Our Lord's words, then, which must have sounded like a strange contradiction to the disciples who heard them, linked together the two worlds of "sense" and "spirit," upon the boundaries of which He was, as it were, hovering and lingering during the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension. Paraphrased, they would signify "In a short time, My bodily presence, which has been dear to you, which you have beheld with your eyes, which your

hands have handled, shall pass from your sight; but soon, after a brief period of doubt and perplexity, you shall receive a gift which shall awaken within you spiritual sight; and, under the illuminating touch of the Pentecostal afflatus, a knowledge shall break in upon your hearts which shall fill you with undaunted courage and with fearless rest, for you shall know Me under My changed mode of manifestation; you shall be conscious of the thrilling touch of My Spiritual Presence; you shall be so penetrated by its reality that it shall transfigure your lives, regenerate your nature, drive away your fears, empower you with such missionary enthusiasm, that, as My representatives, you shall move the world. Out of weakness you shall be made strong; you shall quench the violence of fire, stop the mouths of lions, put to flight the armies of the aliens, and endure as seeing Me, though invisible."

They did not understand; they had not discovered, in the Teacher whom they loved, the interpretation of the secret of the universe. They were at the time materialistic Deists under the influence of a fascinating prophet; their profoundest aspirations reached no higher than to seats on the right hand and on the left in an earthly kingdom. They murmured one to another, "What is this that

He sayeth?" and it required all the appearances, the materialisations, the apparitions of the forty days, to lift them from their surface plane of perception. With infinite patience the Lord gradually accustomed them to the mystery of the universally diffused invisible Presence, leading them on step by step, appearing and disappearing, till they learnt to know that the viewless air around them held the mysterious Presence of the Word of the Father, the Eternal Logos or Reason of the Universal Soul, the Humanity of God, as an all-pervading individuality, and yet not identified with the universe which expresses and manifests Him. And when the lesson was learnt, when they had got clear of the tyranny of the senses, when with awakened intuitions they saw Him, "closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet," all that was implied in the word "opsesthe" was fulfilled; they worked, and preached, and lived, and died, speaking that they did know, and testifying that they had seen.

There is, of course, a broad distinction between our position and that of the disciples to whom the words were spoken. There is, with us, no memory on the plane of the visible to be obliterated. We have never "beheld" Jesus in the sense of the word "theorite." There is no tender human recollection of Him

from which we have to be weaned. We have entered the world in the dispensation of that second word "opsesthe." But the distinction indicated between the two words emphasises powerfully the master secret of human life. This lingering of the Elder Brother of the race in the world of sense, this passing to and fro from one dimension to another, this encouragement mentally to reach into another and higher sphere of being, all indicate that we humans are living in two worlds at one and the same time; that human individuality includes a dual consciousness; a self-consciousness which is related to time and space, and a profounder self-consciousness, possessing higher powers than our normal self-consciousness, which links us to universal life, reaches to that which is beyond the senses, and apprehends the mysterious source of life with a certainty far stronger than natural reason. Swedenborg was right when he said man is so constituted that he is at the same time in the spirit world and the natural world; and he was but echoing the words of St. Paul, "Your life," that is your true being, your inmost ego, "is hid with Christ in God."

The two Greek words in this morning's Gospel indicate that to this twofold life, this dual human nature, there belong two distinct methods of vision, two separate faculties, each

of which may be called seeing. The one, the natural, appertains to the "sense-consciousness." It calls itself common sense; it comes to conclusions through ordinary experience; and it is the first in manifestation in the human animal. The other, the spiritual, is the quickening into activity of an inward vision, which penetrates into a higher sphere. It is an insight into super-sensuous realities. It cannot be placed under the limitation of a definition; and inasmuch as its place in any metaphysical classification is so vague, it is not easy to give it a name; but it is that endowment, bestowed potentially, germinally, on every one born into the world, and best described by the word "intuition." Now, though when this intuitive faculty is fully awakened it takes possession of the whole of a man, and penetrates, leavens, sanctifies all the faculties on the other plane of being, these two methods of sight operate in different spheres, and are placed by St. Paul in the strongest contrast. "The natural man," he says, "perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned." The natural man, the human mind on the plane of the word "theorite," has its great use in establishing religious convictions. It has dealt powerfully with the evidential theology of the Church; it has proved that Deism is

more rational than atheism; it is rapidly abolishing materialism in its coarsest sense; but it moves no step beyond logical demonstration, and accepts nothing that cannot be framed into a syllogism. Spiritual sight, on the other hand, has a sphere of its own. Truths are seen by it that are invisible to the strongest brain; a knowledge is possessed by it which makes the wisdom of the world but folly. An interesting incidental proof of the superiority of this intuitive vision, and its complete independence of the natural faculties, has sometimes been afforded in the case of human beings in whom the natural sense-consciousness was wholly wanting. It was so in the case of Laura Bridgeman, deaf, dumb, and blind from birth. When the spirit imprisoned in that darkened body was reached by instruction through the language of touch, it was found that a consciousness of an unnamed, undefined Divine Being had always been fully active. It was the same in the case of Helen Tasker, in the Perkins' Institute for the Blind in Boston. She, too, was blind, deaf, and dumb from birth, and when Bishop Phillips Brooks began to teach her of God, she signalled back, in the touch language, "I have always known that, but I did not know what to call it." In these cases, and doubtless in many others of the same kind, the eyes of the spiritual under-

standing, equally unhindered and unaided by natural reason, had become intuitively enlightened.

You will probably say this is an unpractical consideration, and you wonder what conclusion I can draw from it. I reply, it is eminently practical, inasmuch as it alters our standpoint of judgment. It is the antidote to despondency. When all seems to be going against the cause of right, of truth, of God, it bids us take courage, because part of the equipment of man is the immortality of God embodied in his nature. It assures us that the real is greater than the illusory; that the inmost element of all, the Soul of all, is God; and He is ruling the world, not necessarily, in the first instance, with a view to its temporal prosperity, but to its eternal and ultimate perfection; and though the preponderance of what we call evil may delay the consummation, no power can ultimately prevent the evolution of the higher harmony of the future out of the perplexing discord of the present. Again, inasmuch as we men belong thus to two worlds, and as the physical man enshrines the spiritual man, and as the spiritual man is the life of God within us, which will keep us restless till it blends with the God of which it is a part, this knowledge encourages us to assume, to seek for, to stimulate and to train

this innate faculty of seeing into supersensuous realities.

Can this innate faculty be trained? Why not? The sense faculties are capable of education. No organ is more responsive to training than the natural eye. The Esquimaux can see a white fox on the snow that would be invisible to you; the mosaic workers of the Vatican can perceive shades of colour imperceptible to others. If the moral nature is not equally capable of training this inner faculty, the lower gift is no analogy of the higher. It was to this inward vision that the Lord always appealed in His parables and warnings and entreaties. The door at which He stood and knocked was the door of the inner spiritual eye. Without this insight His teaching was profitless. The key to the parables and the beatitudes is the saying, "Hereby we know that He dwelleth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us."

Once more. Inasmuch as God is the Universal Thinker, "that we have the likest God" is mentality, thought-power. Eager, purposeful thought is creative. We are learning more and more in the present day of the power of thought. Thought transcends matter and space, and has no relation to either. A learned professor said a few days ago that thought-transference cannot now be scientifi-

cally denied ; that it is possible, with practice, to transfer thought from one to another, independently of the recognised channels of sensation. This is called hetero-suggestion, and it powerfully affects human bodies. It is also possible—nay, it is actually prescribed by St. Paul—similarly to transfer thought from one plane of your own being to another ; to influence by mind-action the subliminal self. He says, “Reckon yourself dead to sin,” “Reckon yourself alive to God.” In other words, strongly think and assert the “allness” of God ; strongly think and assert the nothingness of evil, and power will come to control lower conditions. Now, why should not this be the educative process of the inner eye, the spiritual real self ? What is there to prevent us, for example, from initiating a mental conception, based upon our Lord’s assertion that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us ; powerfully concentrating the mind upon it, and holding it as long as we can ? Such a mental outlook, for example, as this : address yourself in the third person, and assert, “There is a Soul of Souls, a Supreme Father-Spirit, around me, within me ; this is my true ego, my real self. The bundle of feelings and habits inherited or self-formed is not my real self ; it is not I. It is vacuity, negation.* I

* Cf. passim, “Things to Come” (Elliot Stock, 62, Paternoster Row).

desire to affirm, and shut myself up to, this Infinite Immanent life. I desire self-surrender to the faintest stirring of this indwelling Eternal Logos of God."

Might we not hope thus to enter, at least into the margin, of true self-realisation, through the emphatic denial of the false self? What does Tennyson say?—

" Thro' loss of self

The gain of such large life as, matched with ours,
Were sun to spark—unshadowable in words,
Themselves but shadows of a shadow world."

What I have said represents, of course, a suggestion, an ideal, not an experience; but I can see that to attempt it implies vigorous avoidance of whatever would sensualise or materialise the life. It is possible to acknowledge all these possibilities, and for the spiritual intuitions to be utterly sealed, so long as the lower appetites are uncurbed; and, on the other hand, when a man is honestly living out all the goodness he knows, with his life turned Godwards, he may be a mere child in metaphysics, but his spiritual discernment will be quietly unfolded, for "the pure in heart shall see God."

Finally. If, as I believe, the new sense of the spiritual world, which we shall experience

after what is called death, will be conscious identification with universal life without loss of individuality—in other words, a consciousness of the larger self which embraces the “All,” while it still knows itself—we ought to anticipate this condition by acknowledging and acting upon the truth of the oneness of the race, which in this life we affirm without realising. I firmly believe that the undeniable increase in spiritual sight in our day is one result of the marked increase in Altruism, generosity, philanthropy, self-sacrifice, readiness to enlist in crusades against oppression and wrong, which is characteristic of this generation. It is gradually being recognised that it is as infidel to deny the brotherhood of man, as the Fatherhood of God.

“A little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father,” because I leave limitations and go into universal life. That is the promise in to-day’s Gospel. Let our heart’s prayer to-day be, “Lord, open our eyes, that we may see Thee.” Let us pray it for each other, as Elisha prayed it for his servant at Dothan. Let us pray it for ourselves, as Augustine prayed it, “Lord, let me see Thee; and if to see Thee is to die, let me die, that I may see Thee.” And may we all, in His own way and time, be so emancipated from the tyranny of the senses, so lifted from the

narrow limitations of the word "theorite," into the calm rest of the word "opsesthe," that through all the changes and chances of this mortal life we may "endure, as seeing Him Who is invisible."

ASCENSION

ASCENSION

“I came forth from the Father, and came into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.”—
ST. JOHN xvi. 28.

OUR Father's way of teaching us is by suggestion, by stimulation of thought-activity. Ruskin says of art that nothing is satisfying that is complete—that every touch is false that does not suggest more than it represents. This is the method of the Divine Spirit, when, in the words of the collect for to-day, He “grants to us that by His holy inspiration we may think those things that be good.” The teaching of to-day's Gospel is a notable example, and he who humbly and tentatively follows the hints of the Divine Spirit, who interprets rightly the revelations suggested by the words, though as yet he sees only as through a glass darkly, will be convinced that there is a “Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we may.”

When our Lord said, "I came forth from the Father, and came into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father," He indicated three helpful lines of thought. He defined the doctrine of the Incarnation in a single authoritative statement. He unfolded the secret of the dignity and Divine origin of man. He suggested the attitude in which the duties and difficulties of daily life should be encountered. This much I can see, and am bound to declare, and I can but earnestly pray that the threefold truth may become the ruling element in my own life and yours.

"I came forth from the Father, and came into the world." Here is the doctrine of the Incarnation from the fountain Head. How majestic it is in its simplicity; how luminously it contrasts with the theological intricacies and perplexing definitions of the so-called Athanasian Creed, in its complete ignoring of details, incidents, methods!

He leads the imagination back into the dateless past, and bids us think of Himself eternally in being in the Father, as some unspoken thought is in being in the mind of man, before it is uttered in spoken word. From this absolute infinity of self-existent life He "comes forth." He is, as it were, uttered, spoken, enters into human experience, assumes the time-vesture of a body born of

a woman. In that He lives and suffers and agonises, and overcomes the world by passively ignoring the worst that it can do; He reveals God, moving in the world as a vision of purity, sweetness, and light; He touches everything human with His inspiration, sanctifies it by His love. And having planted the seeds of thoughts which were destined to change the life-current of the world; having lifted the whole ideal of the race; having concentrated the wills, affections, imaginations of men upon Himself, He withdraws His visible presence from human sight, returns to the centre of all life—to the Father-Spirit, whose out-breathed thought He was. This is the doctrine of the Incarnation, as defined by Jesus.

The moral life of the Everlasting God has been embodied in all its beauty in the human-divine life of Jesus; and to believe it intensely, to know Jesus as God, and God in Jesus, is to possess the atonement, the at-one-ment, the reconciliation of earth with heaven; it is to be able to think of God, not as formless immensity, but as loving personality; it is to receive a stimulus to obedience, a motive for goodness, a defence against despair, and an attraction capable of lifting our lives above the selfishnesses and meannesses that mar our earthly course.

Herein lay the necessity for the Ascension. It was expedient that He should depart, having finished the work of manifestation which the Father gave through Him. Having shown God to be personal, loving, self-sacrificing, He would now lift the eyes and hearts and worship of men to that character in God. And so on Ascension Day He leads His disciples out as far as Bethany, He lifts up His hands and blesses them, and while He is blessing them He fades from their sight. He is drawn back into the Godhead, and millions of human hearts have rested with a calmer confidence on the bosom of the self-revealing Father, with the thought, "In Jesus, yes, in Jesus, Father, Thou art understood."

But, secondly, He unfolded the secret of the dignity and Divine origin of man. The beautiful truth implied, has very slowly made its way, as the old theory of mechanical creation has gradually lost its hold upon the intellect and conscience of thinking men. "Evolution" is the catchword of modern scientific thought. Whether true or untrue of man's outward material form, is not worthy of consideration. What can it matter to me, or to any man, whether our purely animal part has been evolved from a monad, through an anthropoid ape, or no? It is not in the

anatomy of the body that the greatness of human life is realised. But evolution is true, divinely true, of the immortal part of man. God is the Evolver, and that which is evolved is the immortal human spirit, the deepest, truest self of man. Nothing less than this is implied in our Lord's words.

When He says, "I came forth," He is practically condensing into a single sentence the hidden life history of every human being. Again and again, in emphatic words, that will not bear being explained away, He identifies Himself with the humanity He came to redeem. He speaks of Himself as being the representative, the promise, the pattern, the potency of the human race. Even in speaking of His own Ascension, He is careful to say, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father." The germ of this truth has striven for utterance all down the ages, as when Plato spoke of the soul of man as a "forced emigrant," and Marcus Aurelius called it a "god in exile." But it was never authoritatively declared till Jesus spoke the command, "Call no man on earth your father: one is your Father, which is in heaven."

No, our immortal part, "that we have the likest God," is not evolved from apes. We "came out from the Father, and came into the world." The aspirations and instincts and

presentiments, that have haunted us, are lingering memories of Divine origin, and movements of God's holy inspiration, like the inbreathing of the wind into the organ awaiting the knowledge and recognition of the trained mind and hand to elicit the harmony. The thought may be transcendent, unrealisable, scarcely thinkable, but it is true. It has been beautifully expressed by one spiritually-minded thinker in the words—

“Upon God's throne there is a seat for me.
 My coming forth from Him hath left a space
 Which none but I can fill. One sacred place
 Is vacant till I come. Father from Thee
 When I descended, here to run my race,
 A void was left in Thy Paternal heart,
 Not to be filled while we are kept apart.
 Yea, though thousand worlds demand Thy care,
 Though heaven's vast hosts Thy changeless blessings
 own,
 Thy quick love flies to meet my slow winged prayer,
 As if amid Thy worlds I lived alone.”

It is not difficult to see how, as this truth begins to shine into the soul, it suggests the attitude in which life's trials should be faced. If it be true that the coming forth into the world, the life in the world, and the ascension out of the world, of the pattern Son, is a God-given prophecy in act, of the life, progress, and future victory and restoration

of every son, ought it not to rebuke despondency, to brighten hearts, to stimulate efforts? Life is not the horrible mockery it would be if we had come here by chance, or were apes improved by natural selection, and were going we know not whither. When fighting temptations, when bearing hardships, when disgusted with ourselves, when baffled by circumstances, we may be assured that the Divine secret of imperishable life, which must ultimately conquer the empire of evil, is within us, and the purpose of the Father around us, for the Elder Brother of the race has left us the never-dying consolation of His words, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome, and you shall overcome. Because I live, ye shall live also. I go to My Father, and to your Father. I go to prepare a place for you." And a life lived in this attitude, though it will perforce know dark times and moments, will be an ascending, a progressive, an aspiring life. It will be modelled in its daily details upon the plan of its eternal purpose; that is, it will be a daily "coming forth from the Father, and coming into the world." When failure is frequent, when zeal is intermittent, when temptation is victorious, when despondency is crushing, what is the cause? It is because we did not "come out from the Father," from close true communion,

and go into the world. Try it, whatever your world may be—the household, society, the office, trade—go out to it from the Father—really from the Father—and irritations are less provoking, temptations less powerful, problems less puzzling. He will keep you in perfect peace, because your mind is stayed on Him. And at any moment it is possible, by a mental act of detachment, to leave the world and go to the Father.

Finally, the powerful, practical teaching of to-day's Epistle indicates that the test of the believer's grip of truth is his usefulness to humanity. He must "go forth from the Father," with help and healing, "into the world," or his high profession is either a mere intellectual abstraction or a detestable religious egotism. "Be ye doers of the Word, not hearers only," says the Apostle of practical Christianity. This trenchant epistle, which Martin Luther hated so cordially, detects (as litmus paper detects acid) insincere, speculative, plausible, half-hearted Christianity. You can imagine one in whom the sentiment and instinct of spirituality has been awakened—who is attracted emotionally to religion—coming to consult St. James; you can almost hear him ask—nay, by the law of the continuity of Divine revelation, he does ask it, to-day, in this church—"Is your

religion sound or action? is it creed or conduct? is it word or power? is it faith or works? is it sentiment or fact? is it the poor, shallow, fetish-worship of chattering controversy, whose be-all and end-all is to pick unorthodox motes out of the eye of the Christian who studies a different religious newspaper from yourself? When you look around you at the suffering mass of human wretchedness and sin, when you recognise the obstacles that oppose its diminution, when you know that God's inexhaustible remedy for human depravity is the self-sacrificing effort of consecrated men and women, say, who is the better because you are believers? What are you practically doing, in this monstrous human ant-heap of a city, to wipe tears from faces, to remove stumbling-blocks from lives, to lengthen the Church's arm, to smooth the way of those less prosperous than yourself? Is your philanthropy exhausted by a grudging shilling to the offertory? Is that your reply to the wail of the race! Then," continues St. James, "do not call your sentiment a religion, for 'pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.'"

I wish St. James could take a course of sermons from this pulpit. Then, doubtless,

godly and leisured Christians would crowd to help, by personal service, this deeply necessitous, thickly populated slice of London.

Vast numbers, I know, and God knows, cannot personally "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." Their line of duty is elsewhere, and the claims of modern life require them in different directions; but the responsibility remains, and what you cannot do yourself, you must empower others to do in your name. The army of the Kingdom of Heaven is not raised by enlistment, but by conscription, with the privilege of purchasing a substitute to go down to the battle—to do neither is to merit a deserter's fate.

An authoritative substitute for personal service makes its claim upon you to-day. It is the organisation known as the Bishop of London's Fund. It lengthens the Church's arm, it increases the Church's power. That it should languish for want of support, in the midst of the great wealth and boundless luxury of London, is inexplicable, and affords a curious commentary upon the grandiloquent oratory of the day as to the immense value of the Church, as to the necessity for keeping it in touch with the people, and so on.

It is absolutely impossible that the Church

can overtake the abnormal increase of the population, unless through the medium of such an auxiliary agency as the Bishop of London's Fund; and I plead with you to-day to send from this church a liberal sum to strengthen the hands of those who are nobly and self-sacrificingly working for the good of men in the slums of this great city.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE HOLY SPIRIT

“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost.”—ST. JOHN
xiv. 26.

IT is a great responsibility to attempt the expression of profound Divine mystery in the poverty of human language. This necessity is mainly responsible for the confusion of thought that dims our conception of God, and places ready weapons into the hands of the quick-witted materialists of our day.

It is only with deep humility and reverent attitude that we dare ask, Who or what is the Holy Spirit, “the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost”? What is the nature, and what are the revealed functions and operations of this third subsistence, or mode of activity, in the Triune Godhead? How can we receive more of His grace, be more consciously enwrapped by His presence, live more under His influence? It is quite certain that He cannot be some abstraction without in-

dividuality, or we could have no conscious or responsible relations towards Him.

Now, it must be clear to every thinker that the revelation of the Spirit of God has been progressive, and gradual in mode and quality of manifestation, from the first allusion in the Book of Genesis, where we are told that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," to the miraculous occurrence of the mighty rushing wind and tongues of fire which is recorded on the feast of Pentecost, twenty centuries ago.

First, then, in the widest, deepest, and, perhaps you might say, most abstract sense, the Holy Spirit is the universal influence of the Almighty energy, the one permanent reality of the universe, the one substance behind all phenomena, the driving power behind evolution.

In this sense He is the common source of life which animates all that lives, and in which all that live partake. He is the life which is shared in by all that exists—plants, animals, and men. To rest in this truth alone would be insufficient, uninfluential, imperfect; but it is nevertheless true, and it is beneficial. It is helpful and elevating to be assured that blind force and matter are not the ultimate factors of being; and we owe the conviction that Almighty Intelligence moulds

matter more to the splendid genius and unceasing labour of men of science than to theologians. With what constantly increasing certainty have they discovered, behind the facts of Nature, a nameless, invisible, omnipresent somewhat, which ever eludes them though they ever confront it. They have gone steadily up the well-known steps of mechanism, cohesion, weight, affinity, till they agree that there is one primal force. They perceive that this primal force is self-acting, and free, and works by order. They acknowledge that order, which is self-acting and free, shows the sign-manual of reason. They declare that the origin of all life is energy, and the origin of all energy is movement. And if they pause at that point because they do not acknowledge Divine revelation, we here take the torch from their hands, and we turn to the first allusion to the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, in the Book of Genesis, and read, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," and with humbled but thankful hearts we acknowledge ourselves face to face with the one majestic principle of all being, and recognise "creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life" as a sacrament of God, an "outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual" working of Him, afterwards called "the Holy Ghost the

Comforter." Even this is no light matter. I can conceive a faith which goes no further than this (this belief in the *anima mundi*, or Divine Soul of the universe), I can conceive even this shedding a solemn hush over human life, teaching a man to say, as he sees the sunlight dancing on the glorious green of early summer, "Earth's crammed with heaven"; convincing a man that there is an awfulness and a blessedness in merely living; saving him from thinking meanly or disparagingly of his lot; helping him to believe that he is somehow an integral part of a great whole; that he is enwrapped, enfolded, cared for, by the Infinite Intensity that is beyond his comprehension.

But, as I have said, this is at once the widest and the vaguest aspect of the Holy Spirit. He has been revealed to us as more individual, more intelligible than this. With the day of Pentecost He first assumed more intimate and direct relations to the heart and will of man. What He is in character, love, and intention was revealed in Jesus Christ. That Hebrew form of flesh and blood, which was born of Mary, was as much the Incarnation of the Holy Spirit as the Incarnation of the Father. The appearance of Jesus Christ on this earth brought the Father to us: "He that hath seen Me hath

seen the Father." The disappearance of the visible form from the earth brought the Spirit to us: "It is expedient for you that I," God in bodily manifestation, "should go away," in order that the new spiritual presence should come and abide with us. *Jesus was God's character embodied; the Holy Spirit is Christ's presence disembodied; and these three are literally absolutely one.* The power shed forth upon the first Whit-Sunday was not the initiative, as it were, of anything new, the outpouring upon men of anything not previously in being; it was a fresh unveiling of a living relationship to the living God, the revelation of a closer accessibility to the heart of God than was recognisable before. The Holy Spirit is the outflowing life of God, in sanctifying, inspiring contact; the pleading love of God, as we saw it in the character of Jesus, closer to each one of us than Jesus in the flesh could be; appealing from within to the springs of character in man, that He may conform us to the image of Christ, and fit us for the growing life of the heavenly kingdom.

I will only allude to two of the operations of the Holy Spirit—progress, unity. The first and most marked operation of the Holy Spirit has been to unfold, develop,

and perfect the conceptions of the early Christian faith, "to take of the things of Christ and show them unto men," to unfold gradually, as men could bear them, higher, nobler views of the character and will of the Eternal Father. There are timid hearts, rooted in past conceptions, iron-bound in antiquated definitions, who tremble when the heavenward aspirations of leading minds tend to the modification of some rudimentary view of God's relation to man, sufficient for a past age of human weakness. They imagine that the teaching is new, dangerous, unorthodox. They forget that Christ told us that when His visible presence was removed He would speak by His Spirit, for He had not said all that He meant to say; that there were truths yet to be unfolded, over and above His actual verbal teaching, which men were to receive and believe. Permit me an illustration which I have used in a previous sermon. The astronomers who built those marvels of antiquity, the Pyramids of the Nile, pierced a slanting shaft through the larger pyramid, which pointed direct to the pole-star. In those days, had you gazed heavenward through the shaft into the Eastern night, the pole-star alone would have met your eye. It was in the ages of the past, it was when the Southern Cross was visible

from the British Isles. Slowly, imperceptibly, the orientation of the planet has changed. Did you now look up into the midnight sky, through the shaft in the Great Pyramid, you would not see the pole-star. New, brilliant, space-worlds would shine down on you. But the heavens have not altered, and the shaft of the pyramid is not lying, or unorthodox. A new view of the heavens has quietly come, for the earth's axis has changed its place.

So is it the work of the Holy Spirit to advance the axis of the Church of God, from glory to glory. Aspects of the Eternal One, once prominent before the telescope of human faith and aspiration, grow, change, expand. God changeth not; He is ever the same. But what we see of Him changes—changes without contradiction of the past; changes as the streak of dawn changes into sunrise, as sunrise changes into perfect day—and will change till knowledge shall be no more, and perfect, intuitive perception of all that God is shall fill our souls for ever.

Similarly, the Holy Spirit is ever striving to save and renew the world, by instilling into the minds of men new ideas and possibilities and relationships, inspiring the reformer, the philanthropist, the educator, and the missionary.

The abolition of slavery, the organised and

powerful Temperance reformation movement, the growing disinclination to war, the clearer recognition of the rights of labour, and the acknowledgment of the true position of woman—where will you find these things in the New Testament, except in germ?

They are the direct developments of the Pentecostal Spirit, the outflowing life of the Father and the Son, the love-breath of the ascended Christ, teaching, as men can receive it, the “mystery hid from the foundation of the world,” which is the Divinity of man, the universality of Divine Fatherhood, the brotherhood of the whole human race. Is not this the meaning of the “fellowship of the Holy Ghost,” the fusing power of the Holy Ghost? It is for this reason that an armed Christendom, a warring Church, a divided family, is a direct sin against the Holy Ghost. It is the warning of one of the greatest of human teachers, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit,” “Quench not the Spirit.” However strong may be your own religious convictions, guard yourself against the Spirit-grieving dogmatism that condemns and reviles and unchurches all who denominationally differ from you. Cardinal Wiseman once rebuked Faraday, who was a leader of a sect called the Sandemanians, in these words: “Surely you do not believe that the

whole Catholic Apostolic Church is shut up in that little sect of which you are a leader?" "No," replied Faraday, "but I do believe with all my heart that Christ is with us, though I do not deny for a moment that He is with you too." There spoke a Spirit-taught soul. The Sandemanian went down to his house justified rather than the Cardinal.

The natural law of the multitude of worlds of the solar system teaches the secret of unity in churches and in families. The stars never clash, because they observe a fixed relationship to a common centre, and so they are right with each other. Churches that are absolutely loyal to their Head in Heaven; families, each member of which is loyal to the Spirit of Christ; will be at peace among themselves. Thus does the Holy Ghost "give peace at home."

The gift of Pentecost is yours and mine. How are we using it? That Spirit of the Father and the Son pleads with our hearts this day, as He has often pleaded before. That whisperer of better things, that convictor of wrong-doing, that inspirer of holy desires, that perpetual protester within us against a mere animalised existence, on His special festival day once more says to us, "Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost"; "Know ye not that the Spirit of

God dwelleth in you?" "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;" the unseen is greater than the seen, the world of illusion is ensphered by the world of reality.

Are we resisting, grieving, quenching Him? Well, it must cease at last, for it hardens character. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." I suppose this means that a character hardened by continual resistance to the Spirit can only be unmade by what is called "the second death."

We may, of course, pray directly to the Spirit, though we have more need to persuade ourselves. He is only waiting to renew, guide, comfort, restrain, sanctify the moral life.

If on Whit-Sunday, before gathering at the altar, we need a self-examination, it is here: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, self-control."

Which of these qualities have we manifested in our lives during, let us say, this past week—in family life, business life, pleasure life? Remember, "He that hath not the Spirit of Christ," in whom the Spirit is inoperative, "is none of His."

"Come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire."

GOD IS FIRE

GOD IS FIRE

“ Our God is a consuming fire.”—HEB. xii. 29.

THE context of this morning's Gospel—the Gospel for the sixth Sunday after Trinity—especially those words translated in the Authorised Version “in danger of hell fire,” seem to suggest that I should say a few words in elucidation of that conspicuous, universal, and, at first sight, alarming analogy of the Creative Soul, namely, fire, which is revealed in the words, “Our God is a consuming fire.”

I would say, at the outset, that the expression, “Our” God, disarms the utterance, for the believer in the Christian revelation, of its lurid, hope-destroying, terrifying aspects. “Our” God, the Christian's God, the Infinite Soul as defined by Jesus—what is the nature of this conception? Jesus taught us that the nature of God is Spirit, the name of God is Love, the relation of God to man is Paternal. Therefore, inasmuch as God is Love, and God

is fire, logically fire is love, and love is fire; and love "endureth all things, and never faileth." "Our God is a consuming fire." Obviously the Infinite is unsearchable; but this symbol is one of the nature-analogies of the doctrine of the Trinity. Fire is not an element, it is a trinity of elements in combination. Fire is composed of hydrogen, oxygen, and electricity, in a certain recognised chemical combination, exposed to certain pre-requisite conditions; and in that combination the hydrogen is not the oxygen, the oxygen is not the electricity, the electricity is not the hydrogen—and these three are one. This symbol of the revealed nature of the Parent-Spirit as universal life, manifested life, outflowing life, not one of which is the other, without all of which the totality would not be, is almost without a flaw, and needs no elaboration.

Intelligent Deism and pure reason are virtually one, and in that attitude I will ask you to consider, first, this analogy as it is used—I would rather say misused, as it is mistranslated—in to-day's Gospel, "in danger of hell fire."

The analogy, in its terrifying aspect, has been used, down the ages, by the lurid imagination of preachers of a certain type, to illustrate the awfulness and the endlessness

of the penalty of unrepented sin after death, Massillon, the greatest of French preachers, could compel, it is said, the whole congregation of Notre Dame to rise to their feet in an agony of fear, by his vivid description of the gaping pit of hell. This capacity for lighting up the fires of hell has not been confined to one Church or denomination. A great light of the Roman Church, several prominent preachers of the Anglican Communion, the best known preacher of the Baptist denomination, have, in their published writings, been guilty of exaggerations of language in this direction that are simply diabolical. I refuse to make quotations; I will not sully my lips by the repetition of slanderous blasphemy against the world's responsible Father. These horrible pictures of vindictive cruelty are not only intellectually inconceivable and morally dangerous, but they incline right-minded and merciful men to take all risks and hazards, and to curse the Creator to His face.

The general result of the conception, historically, upon the religious thought of the world, has been fourfold :—

(1) It has created a warped apprehension of the office and purpose of the Incarnation, teaching that the Christ died to save men from the vindictive fury of the Creator.

(2) It has led to the exaggeration of sacerdotalism, as expressed in the old epigram, "The fires of hell make the monks' pot boil." The history of the subjugation of England to the Bishop of Rome, in the reign of King John, is a vivid illustration of the truth of the epigram.

(3) It has initiated hideous cruelties as from man to man. It was the impelling force behind the horrors of the Spanish inquisition. To burn a man alive, to save him from being burnt for ever, was the meritorious motive of Torquemada.

(4) It has diverted the thoughts of men from the serious and solemn truth that the love of God is so perfect, so inexorable, so abiding, that it will shrink from no discipline in its eternal purpose of purifying and perfecting every conscience, every imagination, every character, in the whole universe.

I do not wish to speak dogmatically, but merely to give utterance to thoughts that have convinced my own reason, not necessarily connected with the tenets of any so-called "school of thought." I value unspeakably this utterance of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Our God is a consuming fire," for two reasons. First, I consider that in the use of this vivid emblem he enables us to interpret certain utterances in Holy

Scripture, including the utterance in this morning's Gospel, "in danger of hell fire"; and secondly, he stimulates the thought-capacity, by appealing to a universal instinct of humanity, everywhere, in all religions, recognisable. First, he enables us to interpret Scripture utterances. These it is necessary to condense for brevity's sake. Take the most prominent in the Old Testament, in Isaiah xxxiii. 13, constantly quoted in support of the theory of endless torment by material fire, "Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Look at the answer: "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly." What? Are these the kind of people who are to burn in hell? No. Obviously "everlasting burnings" is Isaiah's symbolic representation of God; for "our God is a consuming fire." Consider, again, Dives, who said he was "tormented in the flame." What was the flame? The flame was the awakening of the Divine nature, with its terrible reproaches; the fire of realisation; the agony of a clear vision of the truth. "I am the truth," said God Incarnate. "Our God is a consuming fire." It was the fire-breath of Eternal Love sweeping away the mists that had blinded his soul, and setting him free by burning the cords that bound and enslaved his true ego.

Once more, consider the words of Jesus, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; for it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than, having two hands, to be cast into the Gehenna of fire, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Now, as this highly figurative passage includes the expression in this morning's Gospel, we will consider them together. There are three words in the Bible, all translated "hell," not one of which signifies the conventional conception of the word—they are Sheol, Hades, Gehenna. "Sheol" is used sixty-five times in the Old Testament. Thirty-one times it is translated "hell," thirty-one times it is translated "grave," and three times it is translated "pit." The word "Hades" occurs twelve times in the New Testament. In the Authorised Version it is always translated "hell"; in the Revised Version, "Hades," which means the invisible world. The word "Gehenna," in the Authorised Version, is always translated "hell"; and "Gehenna" is the word in this morning's Gospel translated "hell fire." Now Gehenna is the Greek name for the Valley of Hinnom, immediately under the south-west wall of the city of Jerusalem. Solomon polluted it by permitting in it the hideous rites of Moloch worship. When Josiah came to the throne he destroyed the

altars of Moloch, and turned the valley into the cesspool of Jerusalem. Offal, the carcasses of animals, and the bodies of great criminals were cast there ; worms ceaselessly preyed on the corrupting flesh ; and fires were kept always burning, to ward off the pestilential infection from Jerusalem. Our Lord uses it as an illustration, quoted from Isaiah lxvi. 24, of the purifying penalty attaching to wilful and unrepentant sin. The worm is ever transmuting corruption into new life, and the fire is ever resolving into its constituent elements, and rendering innocuous, all that is pestilential ; and to draw from the illustration the conclusion that the unquenchable fire and the never-dying worm signify that the wicked are eternally kept alive by the power of God, to be tormented for ever, is not only unjustifiable, but would have been wholly incomprehensible to the Jewish audience ; for, as Emmanuel Deutsch asserts in his celebrated essay on the Talmud, “there is no everlasting damnation taught in the Talmud.” According to the Jewish faith, “there is only temporary punishment even for the worst of sinners.”

Now, as to the Gospel of this morning, “in danger of the Gehenna of fire,” look at it in the light of common sense, and with due consideration of the audience to

whom it was addressed. Our Lord is drawing a distinction between degrees of evil temper and the unforgiving spirit, and illustrating their different degrees of guilt by different kinds of punishment practised amongst the Jews. Ungentleness, He would imply, leading to causeless anger, brings upon men the humiliating penalty of the judgment—the judgment of themselves and of those whose opinions they value. This is the modern application of the words “in danger of the judgment.” Violent or slanderous language exposes the speaker (as the frequent libel actions reported in the press bear witness) to the penalty of the modern substitute for the Sanhedrim, a prosecution before the courts. Language of extreme contemptuousness, such as “moreh,” here translated “thou fool”—the foulest word that a Jew could apply to his fellow-man—would certainly provoke a blow; a blow might result in homicide, and the subsequent casting of the body of the murderer, after execution, into the valley of Hinnom, there to be burnt with the refuse of Jerusalem, “where the worm died not and the fire was not quenched.” This is the correct, the literal, and the common-sense translation of those words, rendered in the Authorised Version “in danger of hell fire”; and though, by analogy, they

clearly allude to after-death purification, they provide no shadow of corroboration of the ghastly conventional conception which is scattered to the winds by the syllogism, "God is Love, God is fire, therefore fire is Love."

But I said that I valued the utterance in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Our God is a consuming fire," secondly, because it stimulates the thought-capacity, by appealing to a universal instinct of humanity traceable in all religions. The precise date in human history when primitive man first discovered that fire was under his own power to originate and control is unknown. The volcano, the lightning, the brilliant meteor, had filled him with awe, but they were beyond his control. The natural inference is that, in the stone age, when shaping and chipping their flint arrow-heads, the sparks from the flints would, for the first time, have suggested to primitive man the possibility of applying artificially produced fire to the purposes of life. The mystery of its origin and the consuming power of its activity would soon have elevated fire into a fetish, and clothed it with a kind of objective existence in human imagination. Very early in the history of its use it became the tutelary deity of the home. The hearth, where the fire was, was the sacred spot, and

the phrase "hearths and homes" still survives. The history of fire-worship, from the "fire circle" of the ancient Finns, to the sun and fire worship of Mexico, Peru, and Persia, is a study full of interest. The worship of fire—Agni—fills no small place in the Rig Veda, and is so engrained in the Hindoo mind that when Keshub Chunder Sen, the celebrated founder of the Brahma Somaj, was dying, he reverted to his ancient beliefs, and, after celebrating the Lord's Supper in his temple at Calcutta, conducted the full ritual of the Agni, or the adoration of fire. The emblem of fire, in its transforming, cleansing, vitalising power, is constantly used in the Holy Scriptures. Under it Jehovah revealed His attributes. When the covenant was made between God and Abraham, the Divine presence was represented by a smoking furnace, and a lamp of fire that passed between the divided pieces of the sacrifice. The acceptance of a sacrifice was indicated by the descent of fire from heaven. It was in a bush, burning but not consumed, that the revelation of the great name, "I am," was made to Moses. In the wilderness a fiery cloud glowed through the night to symbolise the protective presence of God. John the Baptist promises a baptism of fire; and our Lord says, "I am come to send fire on the

earth." On the great day of Pentecost tongues of fire symbolised the Spirit of God; and the Seer of Patmos beheld, burning before the throne of God, seven lamps of fire, which are the seven Spirits of God; and St. Paul says that even the worthless man shall be saved, "yet as through fire." Surely, then, the sons of the Infinite Spirit, who is "a consuming fire," but whose name is Love, have arrived at the height of human perversity when they caricature this glorious emblem of the Divine energy into a figure of vindictive torture. "Our God is a consuming fire." Let us rather thank and praise and bless Him for this symbol of the cleansing, transforming, melting power of His unspeakable and all-conquering love, and strive to apprehend the teaching underlying the luminous analogy. Briefly, it is this. The scientist, as usual, proves to be the ally and instructor of the religionist. The chemical expert has analysed a flame, and he tells us that every flame, whether the glare of the conflagration or the flame on your gas-jet, consists of three cones, one within another. First, there is the inner hollow cone, in which no combustion takes place. Depress a morsel of paper upon your gas-jet for a second, and the central part of the paper will not be charred. Hold a platinum wire over a candle flame, and only

the outer parts become red hot; the centre remains black. Secondly, there is the intermediate cone, the light-giving cone, where the hydrogen is mainly consumed, where particles of carbon become white hot. Thirdly, there is the outer cone, in which there is perfect combustion, owing to contact with the oxygen in the air. In the outer cone there is less light and intenser heat as the carbon becomes consumed.

Our God, the Christian's God, adopts this analogy as descriptive of Himself. He is "a consuming fire"—the centre, a cone of complete protection, the heart of Eternal Fatherhood. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." Whoso dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Nearest to the centre is the cone of brilliant light—the Light of the World, bringing men to the Father. Next, there is the cone of consuming heat—the outermost cone, the farthest from the centre—the baptism of fire, the tongues of fire, the flame of love, consuming all that is base and low and corrupt.

The application is, first, personal; then general. First, personal. So long as I select to live in the sphere of unregulated desire, to indulge the appetites and tendencies of my

lower nature, the fire-breath of this outer cone of the Eternal Love will torment me with the unappeasable restlessness which is the inevitable consequence of a life lived in contradiction to the moral law of the universe. To abide willingly, consciously averted from God, is to burn in the flame of the outer cone. The Father heart of the Infinite pleads, through the Light of the World, to the derelict soul, saying, "Come closer to Me; come to My heart. 'Come unto Me, and I will give thee rest.'" And when, with eager effort, the soul of man responds, "Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee! E'en though it be a Cross that raiseth me, Nearer to Thee," the inner cone is reached, and there is "Rest in the Lord." Measureless love and measureless power enwrap the soul for ever, though the roar of the conflagration is around.

Time forbids the elaboration of the general application, though it is emphasised powerfully in to-day's Gospel. Are you abiding in that inner cone of the infinity and endlessness of the Father's love? Then your first duty is to reach out a hand to help your brother out of the flame of this outer cone, in which, peradventure, he is writhing; and if you do it not, he hath "somewhat against thee." If, in any great moral crisis, I am remaining neutral, satisfied with my

own personal assurance, too indolent or too timid to strive to make it easier for my weaker brother to do right, and more difficult for him to do wrong, he hath "somewhat against me." Therefore, if to-day, on "bringing my gift to the altar," I remember that my brother hath this against me, that my life is self-centred, that I have no part in remedial work for humanity, let me resolve to remedy this lack in my life before I am a day older, for, if I am not "reconciled to my brother" in humanity, by coming to the rescue of humanity, I may think myself intellectually into this inner cone, I may use exalted phrases and hold esoteric conceptions from the cradle to the grave, but after the grave I shall find that I have overlooked the essential fact of the solidarity of humanity, and the judge, namely, my own self-judgment, will consign me to the prison of spirits, out of which assuredly I shall not come till my debt to humanity is paid—in other words, till the particular brother whom I ought to have influenced has been brought into the fold, for our God, whose name is Love, is

A CONSUMING FIRE.

DIVES IN HADES

DIVES IN HADES

“God is Love.”—1 JOHN iv. 8.

“And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.”—LUKE xvi. 22.

WE need not shrink from confessing that many hearts waiting to be fed with the selected portions of Scripture appointed to be read as Epistle and Gospel, are conscious of a painful sense of contradiction between the soul-subduing declaration of the Epistle for the first Sunday after Trinity, “God is Love,” and the elaborate picture-lesson of after-death torment contained in the Gospel. The question is forced upon the mind (not in any sceptical or unbelieving spirit), Can the God who condemned Dives to the tortures of hell, for no recorded fault beyond that of being rich and prosperous, be the same God who is revealed as the Everlasting Father, who in self-forgetting love sought His human children in Christ Jesus and declared trumpet-tongued that He had overcome death and all its penal consequences?

The teaching Spirit, the Comforter, who for twenty centuries has been taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto men, has abolished all sense of contradiction or inconsistency, and made it clear that while there is contained in this narrative a tremendous warning, there is also in it abundant comfort.

In asking you to look with me at this picture drawn by Christ's own hand, I would say, first, that it is impossible to draw from it a single conclusion to justify the God-dishonouring belief in the unending torments of the lost. Without remedial and restoring agency in the world beyond the grave, human life for countless thousands is but a ghastly mockery. The unceasing wail of a sin-blighted humanity, created with God's absolute foreknowledge under the doom of a hopeless damnation, would dethrone God, bring the Atonement into contempt, predicate a victorious devil, necessitate the eternity of sin, and make the heaven of the saved a mere concentration of unutterable selfishness.

To those who believe otherwise there is no lesson, that I can perceive, to be learnt from this history. Whoever can believe that Christ intended here to describe the rich man as suffering infinitely, indescribably, horribly, and I would add uselessly, as a penalty for a

few years of earthly carelessness, can never again speak of the love of God, never be expected himself to show justice or mercy or forgiveness to his fellow-man. That in this case it is not so, is proved by the incidents of the story. St. Ambrose, one of the most trusted of the Fathers of the Church, has said, "Dives, the sinner, is pressed with penal agonies that he may escape the sooner." The proof of the soundness of St. Ambrose's conclusion is, that there is distinct evidence of the development within Dives of the opposite grace to the sin that had wrecked his life. On earth he was self-centred and proud, in Hades he is caring for others, and craving the ministry of the beggar he had despised. Solitude for the brethren is a light-ray from the mind of God, and a proof of the expansion of the heart, which is the centre of human life. It is characteristic of the most abandoned to know nothing of this. During the great plague of London it was a common symptom amongst the most profligate who were stricken with the disease that they were possessed by a fiendish eagerness to spread the plague, that others should come into a like condition of torment. The purifying fire of Hades had the contrary effect on Dives, and kindled the dormant sympathy of his heart, and no man whose mind is rightly balanced will believe

that God, by His remedial chastening, will thus produce amendment in a character only to crush it out in hopeless, endless pain.

We are, moreover, justified in this conclusion by the attitude of Abraham and Lazarus, unless we are to believe that the effect of the Paradise of God is to deaden sympathy and obliterate all natural pity. Even in this selfish and imperfect world of ours there is no suffering keener than to be compelled impotently to witness the anguish of others; and to believe that these, represented as saints in glory, were content to gaze with joy undimmed upon the torments of a lost soul in the abyss of hell, is to predicate that while hell can kindle the sympathy of the lost, paradise stifles the very humanity of the saved.

If Abraham and Lazarus were truly purified saints of God, they could only have endured that sight of suffering in hell without being in torture themselves, because their clearer perception of the eternal loving purpose of God, and closer union with the counsels of the Eternal Will, had taught them that that flame was not endless, hopeless retribution, but love inexorable, in agonising remedial action, consuming the tares and chaff of a wrongly-formed character.

But the very fact of the repudiation, as

immoral and incredible, of the conventional picture of a Heavenly Father, absolute in freedom, power, and goodness, creating any children of His own whom He knows must pass after death to endless sin and ruin, intensifies and accentuates the lesson of warning from this history. The God of man's imagination, and conventional theology, may be appeased, eluded, or cajoled; the true Father of Divine revelation, whose unalterable will is that every child of His shall be sanctified, is inexorable in the assertion of His demands, unflinching in the application of His chastisement.

It is not unfrequently said that universal restitution is a dangerous creed; that to teach that God will conquer sin at the last, that the purpose of the ages is a Paradise regained, a universe from which every stain of sin shall have been swept away, in which every knee shall bow, to the glory of God the Father, and in which God shall be all in all, encourages men in sin.

Surely it is not so, in the light of this picture painted by the hand of Christ. There is far greater danger in the too common theory of an endless hell, to be escaped at the last moment by the deluding subterfuge of a death-bed repentance.

If fear can act as a safeguard, the picture of

Dives in torment is the standing warning to the tens of thousands who, while not living openly in sin, habitually depreciate the power of unspirituality to unfit them for the Paradise of God, and leave them no alternative in the coming age but the undying worm and unquenchable fire. It is intensely significant that the only voice that has spoken out of the unseen place beyond the grave was that of a polished gentleman, with no stain upon his character such as the world would have noticed. Dives probably lived up to the current standard of religious respectability; had he lived to-day, he would have been doubtless a strong supporter of Church and State, an enemy of public vice, and chairman of several societies, and yet when he dies he goes to Hades, to the disciplinary department of the Paradise of God. Yes, this is a picture, not of the fornicator's hell, the drunkard's hell, the blasphemer's hell; this is the gentleman's hell, the church-goer's hell, let me add, for judgment must begin at the house of God, possibly, the clergyman's hell.

Dives goes to hell, not because he was wicked, nor because he was rich. The poverty and simplicity that God requires are not of circumstance, but of heart; some of the richest men I have known have been the most sweetly humble, some of the poorest have been as proud

as Lucifer and as selfish as barbarians. Dives goes to hell, only because heaven is heavenly-mindedness, and heavenly-mindedness is character, and character is continuous; and what we call death does not alter character. He only went, as we shall all go, "to his own place"; when we say a man takes nothing away with him when he dies, we must make one momentous exception, he takes his character with him; as he has become, he is: it is as impossible for a man to live a Dives here, and find himself a Lazarus in the next life, as for him to go to sleep an animal and awake a mineral.

And the characters of church-goers are mainly formed in the lesser matters of daily life. Habitual self-centredness, habitual choosing of the lower line, habitual ministering to the lower nature, habitual silencing of higher aspirations, the encouragement of jealousy, of revenge, of detraction, of temper, of prayerlessness, of indolence,—these things slowly, surely, numb spiritual sensitiveness, destroy heavenly desires, warp character; and while such a life is not inconsistent with outward respectability, and good name amongst men, it is essentially earthly, sensual, fruitless; and "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away." Where? Let the cry of Dives from the penitentiary of spirits

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in the shadow-world teach us where, and why.

The object of the teaching of these Sundays after Trinity is to urge us to self-scrutiny, to invite us to look hard at this picture, Dives the worldling, Lazarus the pauper, and ask ourselves, "Lord, is it I?" Our duty is to examine ourselves; ourselves only. The kingdom of hell as well as the kingdom of heaven is within us: the mischief is there; its origin is there, its power there, its fatal result there.

Two further lessons Father Abraham seems to teach. He says, "Son, remember" (it is well he says "son," distinctly including Dives in the race of Israel, incorporating him into the Divine irrevocable promise, "all Israel shall be saved"), but that "remember" teaches that the hell of Dives is a quickened memory. He is seeing things as they really are; the veil, that is to say the flesh, has dropped from the sensitive spirit; all that clouded the perceptions, dulled the vision, drugged the conscience, is gone. Dives' hell is "naked truth presented to unfilmed eyes."

"I'll tell thee what is hell—Thy memory
. . . Thy gangrened heart
Stripped of its self-worn mask and spread at last,
Bare in its horrible anatomy,
Before thine own excruciating gaze."

The remedy, then, for this, clearly, is to live

as continuously as possible in the spirit of recollectedness of the eternal issues in the midst of which we are; and the awfulness of this picture of after-death fire should teach us sometimes to pray—

“From all wilful waste of golden opportunity,
From all foolish choice of shadow before reality,
From all quenching of the Divine God-spark within,
Good Lord deliver us.”

Moreover, in what he says about the great gulf, he teaches the eternal law of the essential solitariness and singleness of each separate individuality. In the solidarity of the race we bear each other's burdens; in the unity of the individual, each man shall bear his own burden. If we know what it is to love in this world, we have chafed, oftentimes, against that gulf; it is between you and your closest and dearest, you cannot remove that pain or sorrow, you cannot soothe it, you cannot cool that tongue; you can indeed show a little more sympathy than was shown Abraham or Lazarus, you can cry, “Would God I could die for thee, Absalom, my son!” but the mysterious gulf is fixed, you cannot cross it. No, *you* cannot, but its very impassableness, as between man and man, is the guarantee of its passableness between man and God. Abraham does not say, “between God

and you : ” no, “ If I go down into Hades, Thou art there. ” And here lies the conclusion of the whole matter, and the true salvation from the hell of Dives. Suppose I am conscious that I have warped my character, that unregulated desires and unspiritual habits have wrongly centred my life ; I am a person, and not a thing, and as such, have a personal and individual claim upon a Personal God. Am I to believe in a Father who cares not for a repentant child ; in a good shepherd who can seek and never find ? What does He say ? “ If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. ” “ Through the Spirit. ” This is not the asceticism of an Indian Fakir, who torments himself that merit may be gained by self-mutilation. “ Through the Spirit ” refers to that victory over the lower nature by means of the change of motive that arises from the life-touch of the Risen Christ. It is the energetic awakening within man of the Divine Germ of Eternal sonship. It is man, born out of the natural into the spiritual, beginning to live as God’s Son.

God has revealed Himself as a Person in the Man Christ Jesus. His death upon the Cross has exorcised from the heart of every believer the old haunting phantom of a frightful judgment. God has come close to the human race,

has satisfied for ever on the Cross of Calvary man's instinct of sacrifice, taking away "the handwriting that was against him, nailing it to His Cross," and He will now interweave the believer's life with His own. He will "through the Spirit," mortify the flesh-nature in those who receive Him. The mystery of natural growth is beyond our definition; much more, therefore, is the mystery of spiritual growth. The daily, hourly action of the Eternal Spirit of the Risen Ever-present and indwelling Christ upon a humble, yielded, uplifted heart, stimulating aspiration, checking impulse, moulding character, is beyond our definition; but it is real, as real as the unfolding of foliage and flowers from the interior vitality of a tree. The man who is "in Christ by faith" spiritually grows, but it is not he, but "Christ that dwelleth in him."

Believing, intensely, immutably, that God is the responsible, faultless, Omnipotent Father of all men, there is neither contradiction nor paradox between the statement, "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments," and the glorious dogmatic definition, "God is Love." Rather would I adopt the phraseology of this morning's Gospel, and pray—

"Æonian Burning of unending Love!
Called *Hell* by those who dread Thy cleansing Flame;
Lighten our Darkness from Thy Heights above,
Burn through our Sin, our Sorrow and our Shame!

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So may we learn that Love and Fire are *One*;
Hell, but the melting of our mortal shame.
Love burns and glows as an Eternal Sun,
Cleansing, transforming in its endless Flame.

O quenchless Fire! O never-dying Worm!
Eat through the veils that hide us from that Sun
Bitter the suffering—but the Love is firm,
Wavers nor falters till the work be done.”

GOD LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE

GOD LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren.”—1 JOHN iii. 16.

THIS mystic utterance is obviously not exhausted by its surface interpretation, which may fairly be considered as referring to the voluntary self-sacrifice upon the Cross of the One Perfect Representative of the human race. Not exhausted, I say, because Calvary is a manifestation in time relations of an eternal truth, and of a perpetual attitude of the Infinite Spirit, who embodied His moral nature for purposes of recognition in the man Christ Jesus. To grasp the depth, the fulness, the comprehensiveness of this utterance, the power of thought must reach beyond the manifestation of the Cross of Calvary. It is when we have thought ourselves to a height beyond limitation, and beyond Deism, that we are in a position to interpret the expression, “He laid down His

life for us." Who is the "He" who laid down His life for us? and how did He lay down His life? The Authorised Version has inserted the word "God," the translators obviously inferring that the Greek word *Εκεῖνος*, "that one," could refer only to the Supreme Creative Intelligence. It is, then, God Who laid down His life for us. The Supreme Cause of Causes, the Infinite Originator, "laid down His life," and He laid it down "for us." Obviously, then, the expression, "laid down His life," cannot refer to what we commonly understand by "dying." To speak of dying, in connection with the self-existent One, is an absurd contradiction in terms. I think the secret of the expression is discoverable in the following axioms that the laws of philosophic thought demand (1) the universal responsible Fatherhood of the Unconditioned Intelligence that men call God; and (2) that one life, one love, one intelligence pulses through all that is. Granting these axioms, certain corollaries follow. God "laying down His life," the Unconditioned Intelligence laying down His life, and laying it down for us, would obviously refer to His laying it down in what we call Creation. "God, under the constraint of love, laying down, diffusing, differentiating His unthinkable being, His all-producing Spirit, into the limitations of

what we call matter; the Creator evolving the creaturely form in the natural creation, wherein He is hidden, till that form comes to due self-consciousness and self-assertion; God thus becoming the all-containing Soul, Life, Love in all that is; and having thus "laid down His life" in nature, He realises Himself in man, as the highest expression of His diffused "laid-down" life on this planet. Is it difficult to think this thought? It may be, because all real thought is an effort; but it is not so great a strain on the thinking capacity as the attempt made by materialists to free the universe from an originating mind; or the "mechanical engineer" conception of the creationists, who talk about God making worlds out of nothing; or the conventional dualism which virtually accounts for the facts of the world by inventing two supreme powers, whom they call God and the devil. He "laid-down His life" for us by the transmutation of thought into matter, that we might be, under the beautiful necessity of producing a race worthy of being loved and capable of loving. He, God, the unthinkable Cause of Causes, laid down, distributed His life in humanity. This, as I have before pointed out, is the hidden meaning of the parable of the prodigal son. The Father divided unto the younger son, humanity, His

life, that He might receive him back, after education, into the eternal home. The thoughts that flow from this interpretation are almost bewildering in their blessedness, and in the dignity they imply for humanity. There follows from it the indestructible divinity in man. God laid down, divided, unto humanity, His life. Then the essence of God, the vitality of God, is rooted in man's inmost self. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." And the reverse of the proposition is true: in us He lives, and moves, and has His being. We are personal spirits, who have proceeded from God to matter; our very inmost being is a portion of God's own essence. The life which the Absolute "laid down" for each one of us when we came, by human birth, into this sphere of education, is ultimately irresistible; it will work in us, must work in us, until at last we represent in our character and conduct the fulness and unity of God. There is unspeakable rest, amidst the perplexing problems of this world, in the conviction that our individual lives, and the lives of those most dear to us, are expressions of this universal life that was laid down, distributed. God's life in man is man's absolute guarantee of final salvation. We and the Infinite Spirit are one. We do not yet know it as a fact of conscious

experience. The one Perfect Specimen of the race did know it as a conscious experience. He knew that He was a perfect expression of the Universal Soul, of which, at present, we are imperfect expressions. He could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father-Soul; the Father in Me doeth the works; I and the Father are one." But His perfection is the prophecy and guarantee of ours, for Jesus and humanity are the same genus. He spoke of the Absolute as "My Father and your Father." He claimed for us that we are brethren and co-heirs. We have the same origin, the same nature, the same future; and this truth brilliantly illuminates the expression, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us," in order that we might be.

But, still further, this sublime truth that there is, as St. Paul says in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in all"; this assertion that God is the universal Substance—the substantia—of everything; this universal diffusion of His own mysterious Being, involves a conclusion that makes us perceive, in still greater measure, the love of God in thus "laying down His life for us." There is no love without self-sacrifice. Creation was the self-sacrifice of the

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Absolute. A universally diffused consciousness implies a universally diffused sensitiveness to all that affects both the outward and inward life of those beings in whom He thus dwells. We do not yet fully know the hidden reason in the nature of things, for the fiery ordeal of suffering, through which alone the creation can be qualified for the ultimate perfection which God has purposed as creation's final law. We do not yet know. Some day we shall. But God knew it before He laid down His life in creation. He knew that, being immanent in all, He must suffer in all, must travail in pain in all. God is not, therefore, an onlooker from without upon the sufferings of the world, but a sharer from within. And there is not a pang in this suffering universe that does not pierce the heart of God before it reaches man. "Hereby perceive we the love of God," that, knowing this, knowing that even a sparrow could not fall without our Father, knowing that He must travail in pain within the limitations of the universe, and in the bodies and souls of men and animals, He still "laid down His life" in creation that we might be. He endured the Cross, despised the shame, faced the inevitable misunderstanding of men down the lingering ages, because of the glory He had set before Himself, namely, a perfected

humanity that He could love, and that could love Him through the endless ages of eternity.

There follows, of necessity, the logical outcome, the indicated obligation, in the last part of the sentence, "If He thus laid down His life for us, we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." How? Surely not by dying, but by living. Living as if we believed that incarnation, or God "laying down His life," is not an isolated act, but a universal principle; by becoming, so far as in us lies, "imitators of God." To do this is to reach out of the isolation of personality. It is to strive to realise that what Tennyson used to call "Meine leibe Ich"—my personality—that which abides behind the wall that separates me from the universe—is a part of God's universal consciousness, and is shared by all. And to "lay down the life" is to suffer this wondrous Spirit, which we share with others, to overflow limitations, to reach forth and blend with other lives, to feel their sorrows as our own. This is the explaining principle at the root of all generous strivings for a better social order; for truer, more brotherly, relations between man and man; for the overthrow of the old spirit of class distinctions; for the introduction of keener sympathy with the sufferings both of men and animals. Godliness is God-likeness—this

is the meaning of the word. God "laid down," distributed, His life; therefore, to become God-like, is to be constrained by the indwelling Spirit to recognise a oneness which transcends personality, and so, in the expressive words of our Prayer Book, "to comfort and succour all those who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity." The appeal of Hospital Sunday is a direct challenge to this God-likeness, a powerful protest against isolation, a direct demand thus to "lay down," distribute, our lives, and to let our consciousness reach forth to the sufferers in this great city. We know, from the mystic words of this morning's Epistle, that the claim God makes upon our love is based upon His willingness to share the anguish of men; and this revelation unspeakably emphasises the obligation of those who believe it, to share by sympathy, and mitigate by liberal gifts, the pitiful sufferings of the brethren of the race; for the first axiom of the duty of one who believes in the universality of God, is, that "no man liveth unto himself."

We have seen that this thought of a universal consciousness, the indwelling of the Soul of the Universe in all that lives, makes the Creator a voluntary sharer in that proportion of pain which mysteriously

appears to be necessary in the evolution of the purpose of creation. Educative pain in humans ; pain in non-humans, from the law of the survival of the fittest ; pain in both, from the physical law of one animal becoming the legitimate food of another ; all of which was known and recognised by God before He "laid down His life" in creation, and apostrophised by Him as "very good," after He had seen its working. But, at the same time, it adds a peculiar emphasis to the condemnation of pain caused by cold-blooded cruelty, the motive for which is either cowardly selfishness, or impious inquisitiveness ; and, for myself, I believe that no graver cruelty is perpetrated on this earth than that which is committed in the name of science in some physiological laboratories. In these Dantean hells there prevails a prying into the movements of life, by cutting open and torturing living animals, which, if the general public once realised the truth, would be swept away in the torrent of indignation that would pour forth. I greatly prefer to deliver my soul upon this question from the platform rather than the pulpit, because to the pulpit there can be no immediate reply ; but it is necessary that I should make my meaning clear in adopting to-day the expedient of having two distinct collections.

The first collection will be for the general Hospital Sunday Fund, which promotes a noble work of amelioration in this city. The second collection, which will be taken immediately after the first, will go direct to the Anti-Vivisection Hospital in Albert Bridge Road, Battersea Park. Why do I not give the whole collection to the general fund? For this reason: Congregations give their money on Hospital Sunday unstintingly for the alleviation of pain, sickness, disease amongst their fellow-men, not so well furnished with worldly goods as themselves. A certain proportion of this money, which is solemnly laid on the altar as an offering to Almighty God, does not go directly to the relief of the suffering poor, but is passed on to the support of medical schools and colleges, where animals are vivisected, and severe tortures inflicted upon them, and thus to use money laid on the altar seems to me to trespass on the verge of sacrilege.

A vast amount of dust is thrown into the eyes of the public upon this question of experiments upon living animals. We are told, for example, (1) that there is no pain. And yet the eminent surgeon, who dared to commit himself to this astounding statement, has himself described how he stitched a needle and thread through the eyeball of

a rabbit, and left it there for two days and nights. And he, he of all people, says there is no pain! (2) We are told that the animals are always under the influence of anæsthetics. And yet the late Home Secretary, from his place in Parliament, on July 24, 1899, alluded to "serious experiments, in which the use of anæsthetics is wholly or partly dispensed with," as taking place in English laboratories by holders of certificates issued by himself. It is, therefore, beyond all dispute, that vivisection, as practised in this country under the present law, involves the severe torture of animals; and the recent action of *Bayliss v. Coleridge* elicited the fact that the same victim can be operated upon again and again, merely to demonstrate to classes of students in medical schools physiological facts which could as easily be taught them by diagrams or the dissection of dead bodies. (3) We are told that these experiments upon animals are of the utmost value to the human race. We know that doctors differ; but a long list could be compiled, including some of the most eminent physicians and surgeons of the world, who have declared that the practice is not only useless, but directly harmful to the human race. Sir Charles Bell, Sir William Ferguson, Professor Lawson Tait, have all

declared that this abominable practice has led surgeons into errors of the gravest character; and the words of Sir Frederick Treves, to whom the whole nation is so deeply indebted, are worthy of being quoted *in extenso*. He wrote, in the *British Medical Journal*, November, 1898, as follows: "Many years ago I carried out, on the Continent, sundry operations upon the intestines of dogs; but such are the differences between the human and the canine bowel, that when I came to operate upon man I found I was much hampered by my new experience; that I had everything to unlearn; and that my experiments had done little but unfit me to deal with the human intestine." These testimonies could be almost indefinitely multiplied, and evidence is accumulating daily that untold sufferings are inflicted upon the human race from the erroneous conclusions deduced from experiments on animals. But, even if it were not so; if the vivisectors could point—which, emphatically, they cannot—to victory gained by vivisection over any notoriously fatal disease; even if this degrading empiricism were not destined—as assuredly it is—to be the laughing-stock of future generations, the noblest attitude would be to refuse physical benefit at the cost of cowardly selfishness and cruelty. The

late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge struck a high note when he wrote in the *Fortnightly Review*: "What would our Lord have said; what looks would He have bent upon a chamber filled with unoffending creatures which He loves, dying under torture deliberately and intentionally inflicted? A wrong to the creature is an insult to its Creator, and a double insult when we bow to that Creator as a God of Love whose tender mercies are over all His works. To perpetrate cruelty that good may come is, therefore, blasphemy. There is no such thing as necessary cruelty, more than necessary sin."

I have said nothing concerning the tuberculins, and the antitoxins, and the injection of serums made from the blood of animals previously infected with diseases, simply because the suffering involved in these processes is not worthy to be compared with the horrors of vivisection. The practice is disgusting, unscientific, and mischievous. In Paris there is reason to believe that it has caused and perpetuated hydrophobia; and in America, according to the *New York Medical Journal* the enthusiastic advocates of antitoxin for diphtheria are now condemning the treatment. Professor Winters, of New York University, said of antitoxin, "It is because I believe that it is dangerous

that my convictions compel me to speak. The time will come when every member of this academy will feel with relation to it as I do to-night."

I have now explained why, personally, I do not desire any portion of our gift on Hospital Sunday to be alienated from the direct service of the poor, and used for the support of medical schools where these practices are carried on, to the inevitable debasement of the moral and spiritual standard of the students, and why I prefer my own contribution to be devoted to a hospital which is actively opposed to vivisection, and is doing a noble work in a very needy neighbourhood. The efficiency of the Anti-Vivisection Hospital is proved by the abnormal success of its work. Last year it ministered to 14,000 out-patients and a large number of in-patients; and, with more than one hundred operations, there was not a single death.

I beg those who are listening to me to contribute, without hesitation, to whichever collection they prefer. To his own Master each man standeth or falleth. I am not judged, you are not judged, by another man's conscience. Give to both collections if you will. At any rate, do not be deterred from giving to the Lord Mayor's fund from any

fear that you will be classing yourself in any objectionable category. You have a right to your opinion. Have the courage of your opinion, and give liberally. And, finally, I pray you to remember, in the light of the teaching of the Epistle for to-day, that, in spite of the problems and horrors and cruelties of a world which is still in the making, one all-containing Soul, Life, Love is immanent in phenomena; has "laid down His life" in all that is; and that we, if we would develop the higher nature within us, must also, in our measure, and so far as in us lies,

"LAY DOWN OUR LIVES FOR THE
BRETHREN."

THE ETERNAL PASSION OF GOD

THE ETERNAL PASSION OF GOD

“If it be not He, who then is it?”—JOB ix. 24 (R.V.).

THE subject of the previous sermon—the universal consciousness of the Infinite Soul, and its necessary corollary, the universal sensitiveness to suffering of the Infinite Soul—brought to me, as I fully expected, thoughtful questionings bearing upon the perplexing mystery of the prevalence and malignity of what we call evil in the world. “It may be just possible,” say my questioners, “to think the thought of God ‘laying down His life’ in creation, and becoming a sharer in the physical evil of pain, disease, and death. It is not possible to think the thought of the All Holy creating, inhabiting or permitting moral evil. And who can have given being to this dark side of human life?” Here is my answer: “If it be not He, who then is it?” I ask you to reflect upon this question of the ancient thinker whom I have quoted. Note how he hedges you in to

one inevitable inference. Without attempting to furnish you with a working explanation of the universe, he simply suggests the impossibility of there being any other Personal Pronoun. And he asks you the question, "If it be not He, who then is it?"

Who then is it? In that question you are face to face with the unanswerable conundrum of successive generations of thinkers. The ancient Hebrews left the problem severely alone. They clung to the Mosaic system, and the traditional story of Eden and the serpent-tempter; and, after their return from exile, evolved Satan out of the Persian Ahriman, as a convenient working hypothesis upon which to build a theology.

Zoroaster saved the situation by predicating that the spirit of good and the spirit of evil were twin brothers, to be reunited, and absorbed into the All, when the purpose of the All was fulfilled.

Brahminism propounded the doctrine of Maya, or illusion, declaring that evil was an illusion of the sense-consciousness, but evading the question as to how or why this illusion of the sense-consciousness came to be.

Buddhism went further; it even anticipated that strange saying of Jesus, "Why callest thou Me good? One only is good: that is God"; meaning, of course, that the Good is the Abso-

lute, and that the Incarnate One was not *the* Good, but the highest conceivable manifestation of the Good. Buddhism, I say, anticipated this saying; for Buddhism taught that only the unmanifested was good; that evil was in the nature and condition of manifestation, however perfect that manifestation might be. These solutions only play with the problem, and are not worthy to be compared with the inference of this plain, straightforward question, "If it be not He, who then is it?"

The undoubted antiquity of this epigrammatic way of dealing with the problem adds to its value. I know that the date and authorship of the Oriental poem called the Book of Job are uncertain; but the phraseology and the conceptions indicate that it is at least as old, and probably older, than the Book of Genesis. The writer, whoever he is, is passing through a mental experience familiar to us all. He is profoundly distressed at the moral evil in the universe; he utters bitter complaints at the apparent injustice with which the world is ruled. "The earth," he says, "is given into the hand of the wicked." "He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked." Who, he asks, is responsible for this soul of evil in things good, this apparently powerful obstacle to human happiness and moral elevation? Can there

be, he would ask himself, some self-existent person, principle, or power, coeval, coequal with the Author and Source of Goodness, in eternal contradiction to Him? And, recognising that such a conclusion annihilates God, and yet apparently dreading to adopt the inevitable inference, lest he should seem to tamper with the holiness of God, he expresses the dilemma which has perplexed the ages in the form of an unanswered question—a question, however, which suggests an inevitable conclusion—“If it be not He, who then is it?”

Who is it? There is disorder, pain, sin in the world. The two-principles doctrine is no solution; dualism would make God impossible. Who, then, is responsible? Who, then, is it? Blessed are they who are able, courageously and intelligently, to reply to the question of the ancient thinker! Blessed are they who, from profound conviction, can reply: “There is but one Animating Principle, one Absolute Substance, one Love, one Life, one Purpose pulsing through all things. There is but one Personal Pronoun. He can never make mistakes, never be taken by surprise, never have to mend a broken scheme or repair a plan gone wrong. Whatever exists in this visible universe must have pre-existed in the infinite thought of the Cause of Causes, and His name is Love.” And if creation has involved the

endurance of what, to our limited faculties, appears as evil, inasmuch as creation is the "laying down" of the life of God, it is also a revelation of a love that knows no bounds, and to which failure is impossible.

It is in the light of protracted agony or under the shock of great catastrophes that conventional religious conceptions fail. Recently one said to me, "The last three nights have been enough to knock the religion out of me." He had been by the bedside of a dying mother in the Cancer Hospital. Seldom has sorrow reached profounder depths than in that tragedy, of which we read in the papers of last week, of the destruction by fire of an excursion steamer in New York Bay. Triumphant the pessimist asks, "Where is now thy God?" The Deist has no answer. His religion is "knocked out of him." The author of the Book of Job has an answer; you have an answer. Where was our God? Where alone He can be, since He "laid down His life" in creation, namely, in the very heart and centre of the sorrow—in the patient in the Cancer Hospital, in the victims in the burning ship; Himself suffering in and with all—suffering a million times more than the sufferers concerned, because they suffer only in the "each" consciousness, and He suffers in the "all" consciousness; withheld, by the com-

plete perfection of His own voluntarily chosen self-sacrifice, from such interference as the Deist seems to expect, with His own splendid purpose of educating humanity by the bitterness of contrast. "If it be not He, who then is it?" for God and man are inseverable, and the illimitable Soul is guiding, evolving, and suffering in the centre of human life. The infinite sorrow vibrates through His being. He travails in pain within the souls and bodies of men; but His purpose is sure; His resources are limitless; His love is unending; His method is irresistible.

I have lately received a letter from Morristown, New Jersey, U. S., from the gifted author of the striking poem called "Christus Victor."* He had been reading some printed words of mine upon the subject "Does God Suffer?"† in which I have elaborated that thought of the travail pain of the Creative Soul, counting the cost and anguish inseparable from expressing Himself in creaturely existence, and yet, under the constraint of love, not hesitating to speak the creative word, "Let Us make man." And he sent me a passage which he has em-

* "Christus Victor: a Student's Reverie," by Henry Nehemiah Dodge. Fourth edition. (G. P. Putnam & Sons, New York and London.)

† "Does God Suffer?"—Westminster Abbey Sermons. (Elliot Stock, 62, Paternoster Row.)

bodied in the fourth edition of his work, based upon my words. I append his lines, as they exactly express this eternal, consoling truth. The strophe is headed "The Eternal Passion of God."

"When Thou, Almighty Love, dwelling alone—
 Creation uncreate in Thee contained,—
 Didst gaze upon Duration infinite,—
 Years were not then nor time, the cycles fled
 But as pulsations of Thy brooding thought—
 The Eternal Father waiting for His child—
 Yearning for offspring and companionship.

Let Us make man,' Thou saidst, 'in Our own image,'
 God-like on earth to rule: but man must be
 A fit companion, sharer of My thought,
 Free born; though destined to be one with Me,—
 Through evil mastered and through conquering love
 Must he ascend—till he attains My side—
 There is no other way to this high goal.
 Then pressed upon the sorrowing heart of Love
 The burden of all time—the plaint and cry
 Of nature's ravening creatures—human woes;
 Yea, all the tears of men, from Eden lost
 To the dying moan of earth's last denizen;
 Dull heart-break, pestilence, fear, deep agonies,
 Sin's blight and woe on all the world to be—
 All didst Thou see, and on Thy heart didst bear,
 And all the travail of Thy soul foreknew.
 Yet for the splendour of Love's consummation,
 To lead Thy child—mankind—through life's hard
 school,

To walk for aye with Thee victorious,
 Clothed with the greater joy Thou hast prepared,
 Thou, travailing with our woes, didst say,

'Let Us make man.'"

And when I know this—not as an addition to the current stock of human speculations, but by the apprehension of the intuitions; when, in my thoughts, I have disentangled my God-conception from objective Deism, and recognised the indwelling, conscious, sensitive Soul of the universe, I possess a religion that cannot be “knocked out of me,” and I am not afraid, even in the midst of the infinite confusion that at present perplexes us, to answer the question in the Book of Job, “If it be not He, who then is it?” *I know who it is.* It is He of whom St. John wrote, “Hereby know we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.”

The inferences which I would briefly draw from this thought-excursion into the question in the Book of Job are as follows:—

First, the abolition from the mental horizon of the conventional half-God—benevolent but impotent—whose universe is a lamentable failure, and whose noblest effort will be to rescue a few from the wrecked humanity He had far better have left uncreated; and the substitution, in His place, of the Infinite, Universal, Eternal Spirit, whose life pulses through all things, and the endless changelessness of whose love is slowly working out a pre-ordained perfection through processes which our apprehension is as yet too limited to grasp.

Secondly, the obliteration of the conception that evil exists independently of the purpose, will, and foreknowledge of the Universal Spirit, Who "laid down His life" in creation, and the affirmation of the assurance that the unrest, and disorder, and physical suffering, and moral obliquity are part of a divinely prepared system of education, by deep contrasts, from the training of which the human soul can alone emerge with a true moral life. For what is a moral being? A moral being is a being who has struggled and conquered, a being who has learned to recognise evil, and put it under his feet. The only way by which even God can make anything is by means of the process through which it becomes what it is. Even God could not make a moral being except through the process by which a moral being becomes what he is, and that is through contest with evil and the overcoming of evil.* Perfection is in man, because God is in man; but man can only come to consciousness of this deeply hidden perfection through the instrumentality of experience of imperfection—in other words, of evil.

Thirdly, the encouragement of a profound rest in the Lord—a resolution to hear, above

* Cf. "The Mission of Evil," by the Rev. G. W. Allen. Published by Skeffingtons.

the din and clatter of the material world, the whisper of His Spirit, saying, "Fear not, thy true life, thy real life, is God within thee. This painful educative illusion, to which thou hast been made subject, not willingly, is to teach thee what otherwise thou couldst not know. That indignant protest thou feelest within thee is part of the purpose of evil; it is the unlocking of thy soul's powers; it is the interior Kingdom of Heaven within thee coming into activity; it is the unfolding of thy hidden capacities; it is God-consciousness stirring. When the dream of life is over, when thou wakest into the world of realities, thou shalt know that the sorrows of the educative nightmare called life were not in spite of but because of His love. Thus does He keep in perfect peace those who have discovered the answer to the riddle in the Book of Job—"If it be not He, who then is it?"

Fourthly, a stimulus to the higher Christian life. The question in the Book of Job is eminently practical, inasmuch as it reaches to the sources of action and emotion. The weary round of self-mortification and repression is superseded by the noble conception of the indwelling of the Divine Life "laid down" in humanity. Character is formed, not by the negation of the human, but by the affirmation of the Divine: by the slow conquest of the

natural by the spiritual. And when you know that the natural is transitory, unreal, and the spiritual is God-like and indissoluble, you have every encouragement to the daily practice of mental self-surrender to the indwelling Over-Soul; of daily watchfulness, purity, self-control, unselfishness: of daily reaffirmation of the transcendent truth that your real life is "hid with Christ in God." And when the eyes are dim, and the thought is difficult, you have JESUS, the one Supreme, Perfect out-birth of this "laid-down" life of the Absolute; and He assures you that your sonship is essentially and potentially of the same nature as His; and that in your weak moments He will be the Mediator, that is, the uniting Medium, between the Absolute and you; for "God is in Him, reconciling the world to Himself"; and, having Himself passed through the school, He is able to "succour them that are tempted," and "save to the uttermost them that come unto the Absolute through Him."

Finally, the inference from the question in the Book of Job encourages us to add our contribution to the evolution of the "one far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves." How? Obviously by active, aggressive efforts of amelioration; that goes without saying. But, beyond this, by intercessory prayer on the highest plane. And what is that?

It is a maintained mental attitude of willingness to be used by the Soul of the Universe as an instrument for effecting what He designs. Real intercession is God thinking and willing through man, in whom His life is "laid down." The will of man, under the stimulus of eager desire, becomes firmly fixed upon some object which is cognised by the imagination; it is blended earnestly with the will of God; and that object is effected—I do not know how. The imprisonment, the isolation of personality, hides from us the pulsing of these influences through the organic whole; but when the indwelling Love would bring something to pass, He thinks it and wills it through the thoughts and the wills of those most yielding to His Divine life and influence; and activities are set free, and things happen, that would not be set free, and would not happen, without this concentration of many awakened minds set upon the same object. I cannot describe it, but you have seen it at work in this Church. You who understand, use the power just now—now when the most dangerous monopoly in the kingdom is controlling the State, dominating politics, and ordering the Church to come to its heel. Moreover, let this inspired question in the immortal literature stand between you and every rudimentary conception of God. It contains the only hypothesis that

adequately accounts for all the facts of life; and in times of soul-darkness, perplexity, and distress, fear not to look inwards into the depths of thine own self, and outwards into the boundlessness of which thou art a part, and say,

“IF IT BE NOT HE, WHO THEN IS IT?”

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